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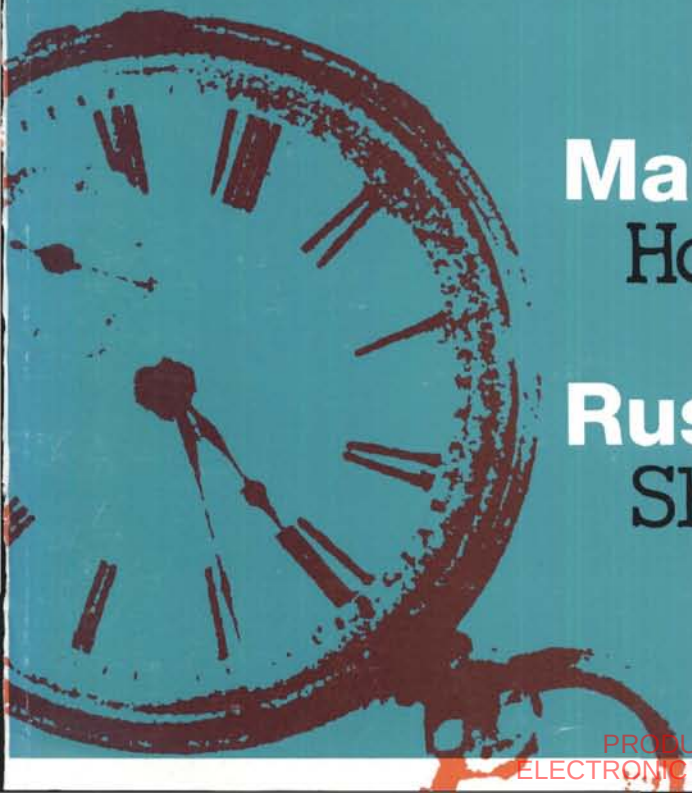

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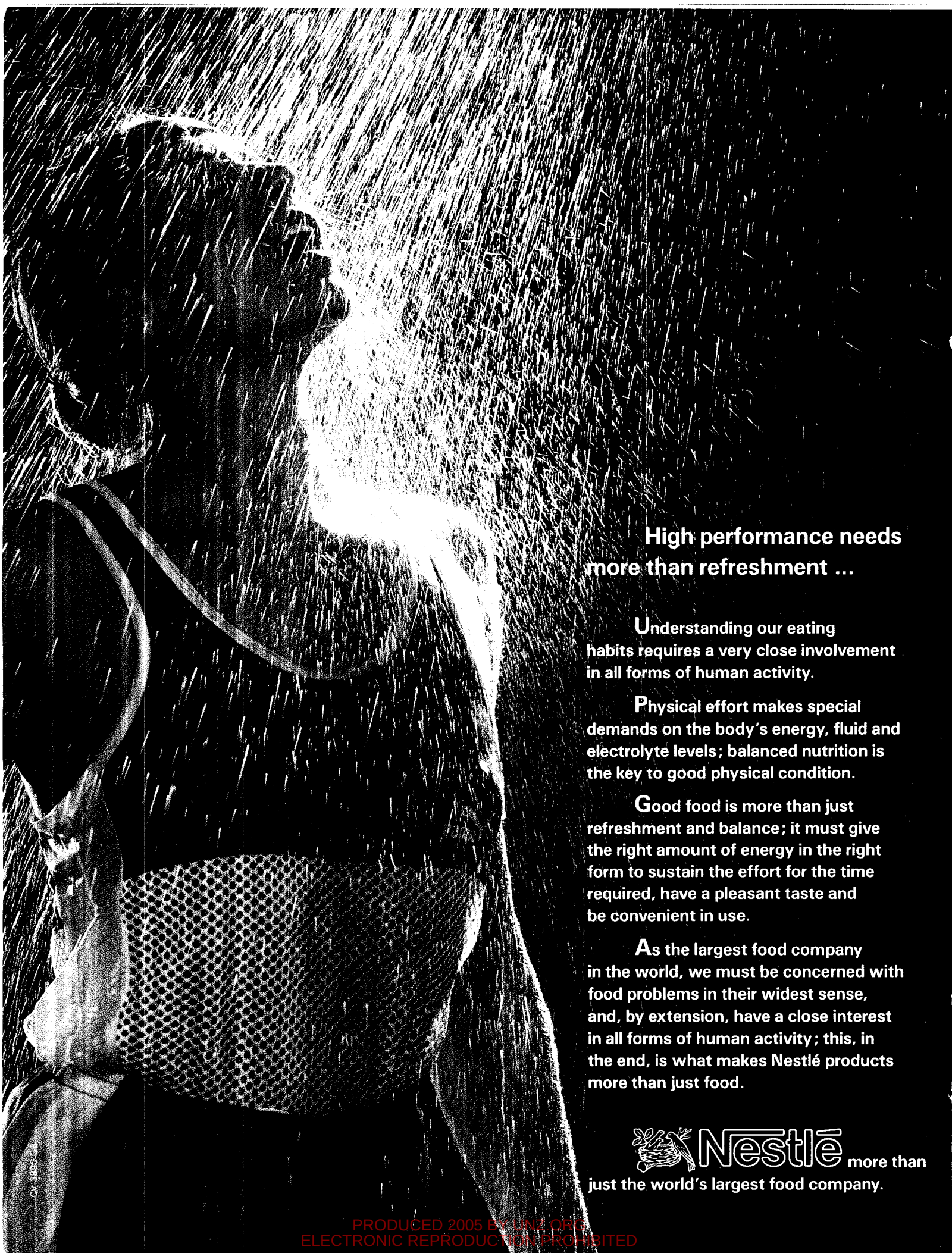

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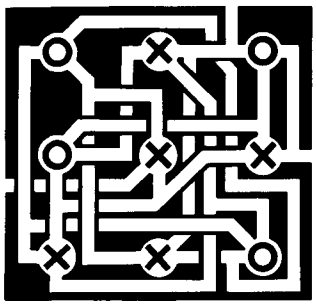
Kenneth Minogue

Societies Collapse, Faiths Linger On

Christians & Communists in Confusion



SCIENCE PROGRESSES because of the ruthlessness with which it jettisons error. Political life, by contrast, is marked by the cyclical recurrence of error in which old mistakes periodically return to wreak havoc in human affairs. When régimes collapse, as they have collapsed all over the Communist world in 1989, the principles and ideals which animated them can be glimpsed creeping stealthily away from the rubble, unscathed. Communism "never failed"—its exponents can be heard muttering—it was "never tried". This is why, in socialist circles, the recent embarrassing developments in Eastern Europe are being referred to as "the collapse of the Stalinist model".[1]

In order to understand this feature of modern politics, one must distinguish between politics and its intellectual shadow, ideology. Politicians can to some extent learn from experience, but an ideological allegiance (such as socialism often is) has a different character. To be a socialist in this ideological sense is not to be a person holding opinions which might be rationally modified; it is not even to support some specific kind of governmental project. It is to affirm a self-identity as a particular kind of moral *thing*. Ideological politics—and there's a bit of it in most of us—is an encounter (technically known as a "struggle") between identities of this kind. Individuals lose their rational character and become fixed intellectual positions, sometimes self-described as liberal or socialist, sometimes abusively characterised, such as "racist" or (usually these days) "fascist". Such identities are relatively impervious to what happens in the world, and rightly so. Who would sensibly allow his moral identity to be compromised by the crimes and follies of Honecker, Deng, Ceausescu, and their like? But these moral identities are obviously dangerous because they dispose loyalists towards absurd political projects, every failure of which costs lives and blights the experience of whole generations of people.

The sudden remarkable collapse of a system which has dominated the allegiance of many Western intellectual classes during the 20th century is thus an invitation to prediction, and a rare opportunity to recognise that certain political doctrines which have been popular in our time are unmistakably wrong. This is, no doubt, a tactless enterprise which will offend many delicate sensibilities; but the prospect of making even a slight advance in political wisdom is worth the aggravation that will be caused. Furthermore, if we assume that men are in some degree rational, to formulate what must now be recognised as conspicuous errors will not only advance discussion, but also help us predict the way in which political controversy might develop in the new decade. But before illustrating what a syllabus of popular errors might look like, we must recognise the limits of the project.

The first point to note is that no syllabus of errors will change the fact that Britain, like all liberal-democratic societies, is irredeemably dualistic. The terms "Right" and "Left" are indeed absurd, but they do represent the fact that changing circumstances make little impact upon the temperamental cleavage which has given us Roundhead and Cavalier, Whig and Tory, High and Low Church, and so on down to Wet and Dry. The banners change, but the procession never ends. Politics is, among other things, an arena of self-expression, and there seem to be two basic political selves to be expressed—perhaps tough and tender, as William James suggested. They clamour for expression in parties, protests, and partisanships. Nor is this fact to be regretted. Each disposition is in part held in place by its opposition to the other. We should be bored and bereft without them. And if, impossibly, the Left of the spectrum were to be wiped out, there would rapidly be a "dressing by the Right" which would soon fill what would have to be recognised as a gap.

The only point more basic than this is that whatever errors we may redeem ourselves from will not change the fact that human beings are inescapably subject to folly. This is a fact popularly understood under the rubric of "Sod's law". Among historians, it is the ceaseless awareness that the course of events, far from being planned, is a string of consequences no one ever quite intended. A scientific analogue of the point is currently known as "chaos theory", by which tiny variations in the real world build up to consequences which upset the best-laid theories. The general point would not be worth mentioning at all, being so obvious, except for the fact that many political proposals are ad-

[1] Thus E. P. Thompson in a classic exhibition of an injured self-righteousness wrestling with inconvenient development writes: ". . . . 'socialism' has not been discredited, although command economy communism has . . . ." (*New Statesman & Society*, 26 January 1990, p.30).

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vanced in such a way as implicitly to deny its existence. The basic fallacy here is the propensity to criticise the evident defects of the way we live now in terms of utopias and blueprints which have never been tried, as if these blueprints could be actualised without falling into comparable or worse defects. It is a constant puzzle in political argument how this most obvious of errors can be committed; and the reason is, perhaps, that it lacks an established name. Christians used to call it "original sin", but perhaps if we flag it here as "the folly factor" we shall remind ourselves of its importance. And its importance is very great indeed, for it has been one of the curiosities of the last two decades that as radicals have lost plausible utopias of one kind or another—from the Soviet Union to Cuba—they have become even more ferociously intolerant of the society in which they actually live. This is a vital clue to the way in which politics will develop in the next decade, and I shall return to it.

Finally, we may observe that the only errors we may confidently detect are negative in character. If we treat experience as a kind of laboratory experiment, then the only conclusions we shall be able to draw are that such-and-such a policy does not work, or such-and-such a proposition is not true. What succeeds in politics (as in anything else) is likely to succeed because of a complex concatenation of circumstances, many of which will be unrecognised by us. This point is also elementary, but it is commonly ignored when publicists advance what is perhaps the most characteristic form of rational political argument of our time: that because such-and-such a policy has worked in one country, it will also work in another. The British have been peculiarly susceptible to this type of reasoning ever since they started seriously to worry about their stagnant economy; and they have ransacked the world for ideas on how to improve it. Indeed, this error goes back at least to the 17th century, when Thomas Hobbes stigmatised, among the dangers to peace and good government, the tendency "to imitate foreign nations".

Since the only valid conclusions of political wisdom are negative, it is clear that Conservatism is least likely to generate errors, while Socialism, being a positive and experimental doctrine, will generate many. Intellectually, this may not be to its discredit; but since political errors cause the death and misery of the victims of bad government, it warns us that what many intellectuals find positive and exciting—Marxism, for example—may be politically vile and deadly in the real world.

WHAT COMMON political propositions have, then, been falsified by recent events? In random order, I suggest the following. It is an error to think:

1. That it is only something called "the profit motive" which causes degradation of the environment by reckless industrial development. Environmental problems arising from Communist central planning are horrific, and the reason is obvious: the same set of people is responsible both for production and for the proper regulation of production. It is only if these two functions are clearly separated that pollution, industrial accidents, and other such evils may perhaps be mitigated.

2. That we may aver that any government has the support of the people unless it is regularly subject to elections at which opposition parties can compete. Monolithic one-party governments may, indeed, have some popular support—but we cannot know when they have, and when not. At a more profound level, we may say that the whole notion of popular support, of representing a public will, is only meaningful where a proper democratic process—that is to say, one with competing parties—takes place.

3. Parallel considerations may lead us to construe as an error any attempt to show that there is a form of democracy qualitatively superior to the representative democracy we currently enjoy. Such attempts are usually based upon infla ting the term "democracy" to a point where it is assumed to be the whole cause of human happiness, and its lack the cause of human misery. The inhabitants of Communist countries were constantly told that they enjoyed a qualitatively superior democracy to that of the West, but as they moved through the Berlin Wall and sniffed the air of freedom, it was clear that they knew perfectly well what freedom and democracy were all about. There is little doubt that "democracy" is the most dangerous term in our political vocabulary. It is a serious misdescription of modern constitutional government, and generates discontents which encourage those who hate individuality to argue that *all* the institutions of civil society should be reorganised in its terms. In this form, it caters to the illusion that society can somehow be arranged so that everybody gets whatever he or she wants.

4. That matching the arms build-up of an opposing side inevitably fuels an arms race that can only end in war. This was the argument most dramatically advanced by CND and other components of what its own members called "the Peace Movement", especially at the time of the siting of Cruise and *Pershing* missiles, in the early 1980s. This is one of the few quite unambiguous predictions in politics which has been proved to be totally false. In terms of this erroneous prediction, a great deal of hysteria was whipped up in 1983 (when one man shot himself and his family to save them all from the horrors of nuclear annihilation). It is now apparent that the siting of these missiles was one of the factors which made it clear to the Soviet leadership that they could gain no political ascendancy by attempting to overawe the West by superior armaments. *Perestroika* was the direct outcome of a firm and consistent Western anti-Communism, which demonstrated that the Soviets were playing a game that was ruining them. We may, I think, go further to suggest that without the firmness of the whole Western response during the last few decades, the international system would have unravelled dangerously, to the opportunist advantage of the Soviet bloc.

5. That the so-called "Cold War" was largely caused by aggressive Western attitudes leading to an understandably defensive attitude on the part of the Soviet Union is now an idea proved false on all counts. Yet public commentators can still make foolish remarks denying this. Thus David Dimbleby (in a trailer for his interview with Mrs Thatcher on BBC 1 on 27 November 1989) characterised the changes in Eastern Europe as "calling the old Cold War attitudes in question". On the contrary, these events entirely confirm those attitudes. I have written "so-called" before "Cold

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War" because this term has often been used to denigrate anti-Communism. In fact, the Cold War began with the Communist Revolution of 1917, whose quite explicit aim was to remake all societies in its image. Mr Khrushchev's promise to "bury" the West merely restated the basic and explicit ambition of Marxism. To sneer, therefore, at "anti-Communists" was a refusal to recognise a Communist policy to undermine the West on all fronts—a policy which has, under *Glasnost*, been freely admitted and (we may hope) abandoned.

Ronald Reagan was mocked for calling the Soviet Union "the evil empire". That it is an empire is now more than ever a visible fact of life—and if a régime constructed upon the corpses of millions of its inhabitants and the incarceration of millions more cannot be validly described as "evil", then I do not know what could be. One never seems to see an argument against this expression, but one also hardly ever sees it used without an escort of sneer-quotes. Such behaviour is, I feel, reminiscent of Socrates being mocked by Polus in Plato's dialogue, the *Gorgias*. What, says Socrates, ironically, is this mockery a new kind of argument? Reagan, incidentally, appears in the context of the moment as a man of quite remarkable instincts. His espousal of the idea of "Star Wars" may be, as some have suggested, a typically Yankee attempt to return to the invulnerability of the early American Republic; but, whatever its implausibilities, it played an important part in persuading the Communists to give up the power game of military intimidation.

Reagan's remark usefully points to the basic reality of the Soviet Union as a superpower: in 1917, the old Czarist empire was taken over by a collection of largely cosmopolitan revolutionaries, whose ambition was to "change the world". "The socialist sixth of the world", thereafter, had a dual personality: half Russian, half Communist. During World War II, the Russians began to take back the power they had lost; and the collapse of Communism is, from this point of view, merely the restoration of a Russia which has for three generations been living through the nightmare of Communism. We shall no doubt have problems dealing with Russia as a great power, but they are likely to be manageable, quite unlike those of dealing with Bolshevism.

6. That Soviet policy has been dictated by "fear of the West" is another piece of nonsense which cannot survive recent events. Dissidents have long held this opinion. What demonstrates it is the way in which Mikhail Gorbachov has allowed the Soviet Union to sink into a ferment of reform, thus opening up immense international vulnerability, in the firm confidence that the United States and its NATO allies have no aggressive designs on that country.

7. That Socialism or Communism, in doing away with profit and other commercial considerations, introduces "the brotherhood of man", is also an error which can no longer be rationally sustained. The behaviour of Russian waiters and shop-assistants is a vivid reminder of the point, as is the extent of crime, corruption, and sheer careless incompetence in Russian industry. This is, of course, a lesson we might have learned from nearer home. The medical and nursing professions in Britain had an immense inherited sense of vocation a generation ago, even though they were not well rewarded. It would be hard to argue that, as part of the Welfare State's National Health Service, their moral tone has notably improved.

8. That aid to underdeveloped countries is so obviously beneficial that Western countries ought to commit themselves to spending a fixed proportion of their GNP on it is an error which is now visibly expiring. Over many parts of the Third World, there is an inverse relationship between the size of the Aid package and the economic development of the country. Newly-independent countries often used to demonstrate their independence of mind by saying that they would refuse Aid if strings were attached to it. A few strings might have prevented much of it from ending up in numbered accounts in Switzerland; a few more would have blocked absurd prestige projects. Who now reads the Brandt Report? It is to be recognised as an assemblage of the clichés of a vanished era. Yet even today Western countries are being asked to write the cheque for the regeneration of countries devastated by post-War East European socialism, and the demand is made most vociferously by the people who most dislike what they call "Capitalism".

9. That liberation movements "liberate" has been one of the most basic errors of the entire period since 1945. Any gang of thugs had merely to call itself a "liberation movement" and it could count on Left-wing support from all over the developed world. Most of Africa fell to liberation movements—and "fell" is the right word. Millions who passionately supported Vietnamese liberation have been remarkably silent about the obvious awfulness of the Communist régime. They also supported the Khmer Rouge in its efforts to topple the Lon Nol clique; and the most recent disillusion has been the behaviour of SWAPO. The very word "liberation" is clearly a Pavlovian stimulus which causes many an intellectual to salivate uncontrollably.

The logical point raised by the concept of liberation here has often been made by political philosophers, above all by Rousseau who is sometimes lumbered with the responsibility of inspiring these awful movements. It is that if people really are enslaved, then they will only create a new form of slavery if they revolt. Freedom is not something that comes from struggle or revolutions, but from the slow growth of free and independent practices in social and political life.[2]

THAT IS, PERHAPS, enough errors to be going on with. It is important to define them, clarify them, and advance them into political discussion, because even as the evidence of falsification tumbles out on to the pages of the newspapers, semantic shifts and circumstantial quirks are conspiring to obscure their force.

Consider the Chinese student reported in the London *Times*, remarking as he fled Tiananmen Square: "Now I know what fascism's really about." Fascism? Again, even socialists have now recognised that central planning won't produce what a modern society needs, yet already we are hearing about the need for a new comprehensive "vision" of the future course of society. Perhaps we shall soon hear

[2] See my article in ENCOUNTER, "The Idea of Liberty and the Dream of Liberation", July-August 1987.

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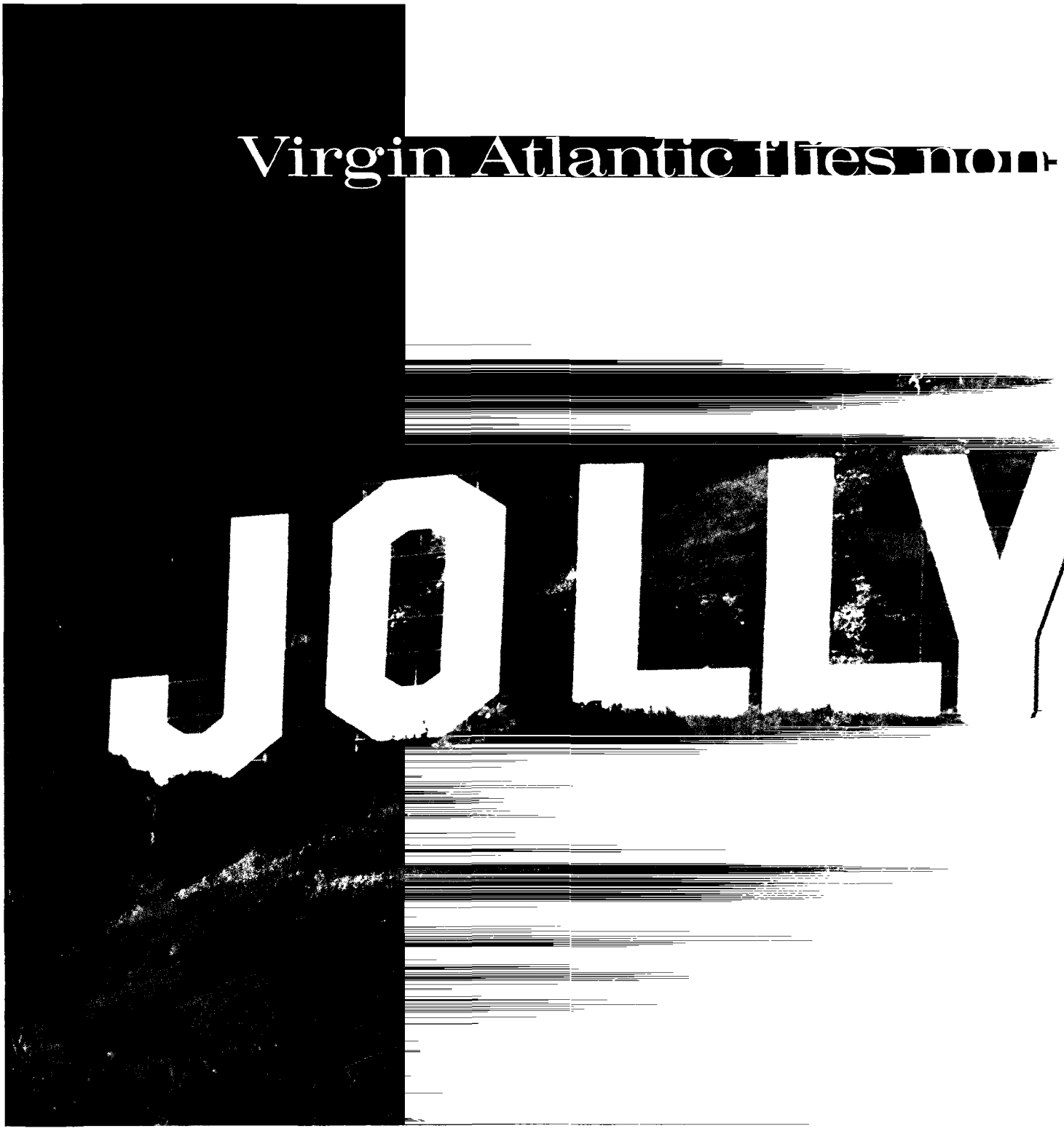

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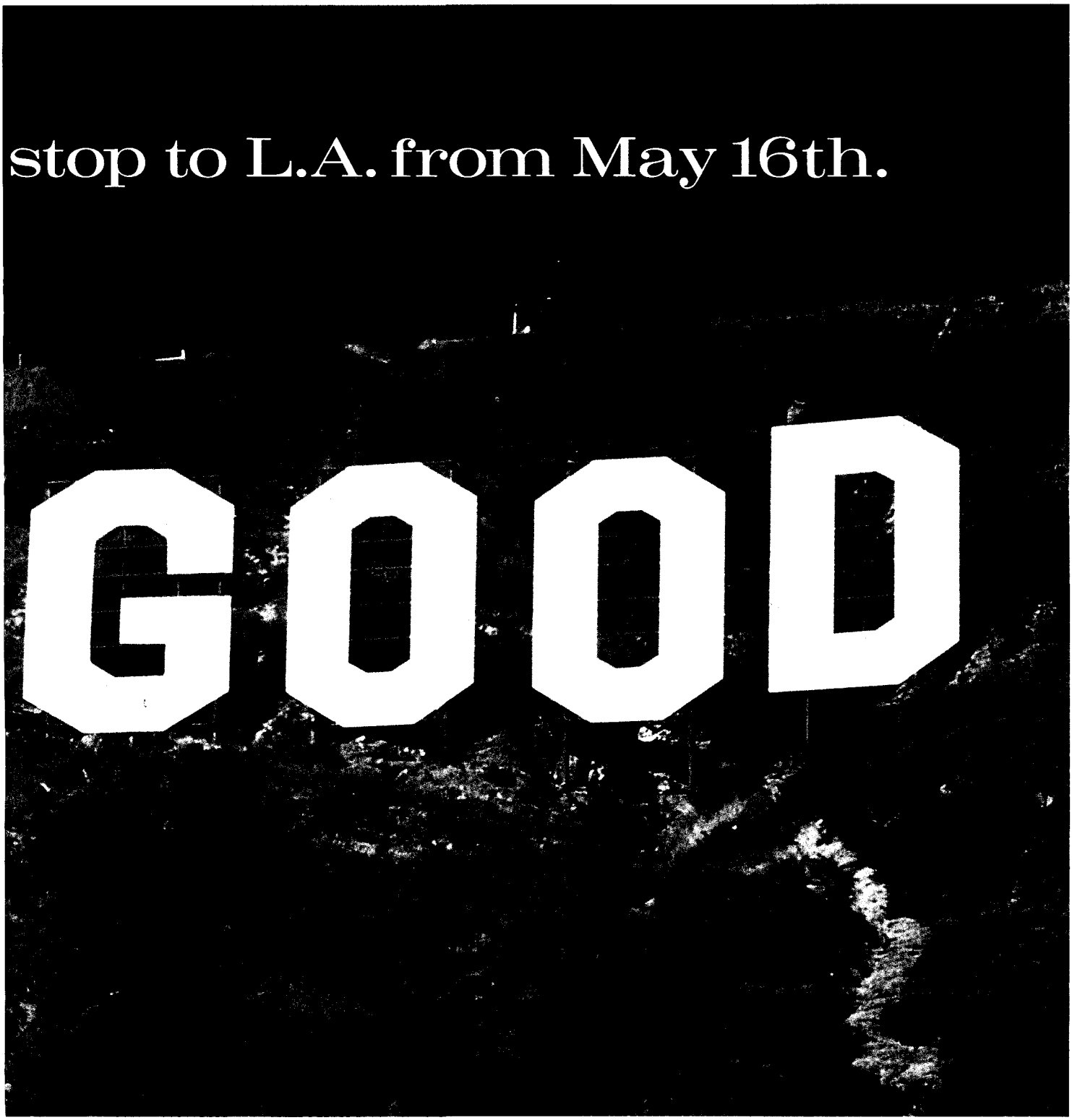

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people talking about the need for "central visioning". The term "Right-wing" when coupled with expressions like "Falangists" or "death squad" is still regularly used to pretend that some political killing is more reprehensible than other killing—specifically, the slaughter done by Left-wing guerrillas. And what are we to say of the remarkable practice of both newspapers and television, even our own dear BBC, of calling those who are opposed to Mr Gorbachov's reforms "conservatives"? On the contrary, Mr Gorbachov is in some respects a radical reforming Thatcherite, and the people who oppose him are hidebound Marxist-Leninists. The last refuge of an ideological scoundrel is the semantic shift.

Those who have long cherished the negative truths enshrined in these errors deserve, in the future, a better class of political controversy than they will be able to have if forgetfulness quickly settles again over the scene. This is not, of course, to pretend that being right about Communism was to be right about everything, or indeed that it was very difficult. Many of us long believed that although totalitarianism was a hollow shell, it would not collapse at the first blowing of a trumpet—but so it seems to have done, though it is much too early to be confident about the matter. And the end of Communism—what Zbigniew Brzezinski in his new book calls "the Grand Failure"[3]—is not, of course, the end of problems. The transition to democracy in Eastern Europe will not be easy, and the end of Marxism merely leaves us face to face with much more intractable problems in our own society. This is why it seems to me important to go beyond the specification of errors to ask: Why has it been that so many people invested so much passionate allegiance in anything so foolish as Marxist Communism?

ERRORS COME in all shapes and sizes, and no doubt afflict us all. What we certainly must recognise is, specifically, the plurality of types of error. Those I have so far roughly formulated have the transparent character of beliefs which do not correspond with the facts. That is why the dramatic events of 1989 can be plausibly taken as a massive exercise in falsification. The more intractable errors are of a subtler kind, and it is essential that we should get a purchase upon them. Can we discover some central form of ideological error of which the Communist projects of this century are an instance?

A first approximation to formulating such an error might run as follows: Communism was wrong because it was a social plan imposed upon whole populations with such enthusiasm that morality and manners were taken to be of no real account by comparison with implementing the plan. The point about morality will be easily granted, since the killing and lying of totalitarian rulers has always been conspicuous and widely found repulsive. But why should we worry about civility and about good manners, which seem trivial things in comparison with life and truth? Here, it is significant that in the 17th century Thomas Hobbes clearly identified incivility as an important cause of social breakdown, and Edmund Burke included manners among "the decent drapery of life". For it is manners rather than morality itself which incline us to listen to the opinions of others and to take them seriously. A collapse of manners has always been the prelude to the collapse of moral standards. In this way we may fill out the common view that what was wrong with Communism (and of all such social plans) was that it took the end to justify any means, including the trampling of moral and civil restraints underfoot.

The shape of ideological error comes more clearly into focus when we add a further condition: that the intensity of enthusiasm for a social plan often depends on its being combined with a structural analysis of the present world. Such analyses have been worked out in terms of a variety of familiar sociological abstractions: Class, Race, Gender, Nation, Town and Country. The discovery of some such explanatory fundamental constitutes the revelation by which converts excitedly discover that the vague dissatisfaction with life which had always troubled them is actually part of a single dehumanising system. Being the analytical wing of a plan for total human reconstruction, such revelations extend far beyond politics into every corner of life, leading ultimately to the discovery that even the personal is the political. A kind of politics, in other words, becomes a cannibal and swallows up everything. Marxism and Feminism are currently popular examples of the sort of intellectual structure involved; but fragments of many theories in the Western humanities and social sciences can be fitted together to provide the same kind of ideological revelation about the world in which we live. What justifies the brutal implementation of the social plan is thus not only the desirability of the plan but the supposed cogency of the analysis.

TWO AMONG THE MANY features of such modern intellectual constructions[4] are vitally relevant to the present argument. The first is that all such doctrines establish a basic distinction between those who understand, and the rest of the population, supposedly bemused in its condition of "alienation". In one of the most popular of the available vocabularies, this distinguishes *progressives* from *reactionaries*. More precisely, these two groups fight for the allegiance of the population at large—those who have had the benefit of the revelation, and those still sunk in "false consciousness"—and there can, thus, be no serious discussion between them. The only possible relationship between a progressive and the rest of the population is tutorial: the false thoughts of reaction must be destroyed and replaced by the true understanding of the progressive. It is this basic conviction which makes the rostrum and the pulpit so attractive to ideologists in liberal-democratic countries, for it gives them a kind of licence for doing what they most passionately want to do anyway. The real tutorial character of ideologies such as Communism only emerges, however, when Communists gain political power. Their first move is invariably to suppress every alternative form of instruction and arrogate to themselves—with no obvious legitimacy—the guiding role of the vanguard party.

[3] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Scribner, 1989).

[4] For an extended discussion, see Kenneth Minogue, *Alien Powers: The Pursuit of Ideology* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984).

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The second consequence of embracing this kind of ideological belief is an addiction to melodrama. The world is divided between the good people and the bad (most of the population being hopefully construed as forever on the verge of seeing through society's imposture); and the structural analysis provides the clues as to whom we should support and whom we should hate. This is, of course, very odd: the structural analysis purports to be scientific, and in a scientific understanding of the world there can be no melodrama. Science and struggle are not logical bedfellows. The error we are concerned with is hardly a very sophisticated one.

THROUGHOUT the 20th century, the validity of the social plan, the truth of the structural analysis, and the force of the melodrama have been inseparable parts of ideological belief. But in recent decades, the positive element of belief in the viability of the social plan has been progressively destroyed by disillusion with the existing models of social progress. The physical collapse of Communism in the late 1980s is merely the culmination of something which has been going on for a long time. Now it might seem that this development might provoke the obvious rational response: a recognition that the faults of the existing liberal-democratic society were both more intractable and perhaps less serious than might have been thought.

Among some believers, there are signs of just such a development—especially among members of the Communist Party in Britain who, having committed themselves more completely to the Soviet version of the plan, would seem to have had no other option than to recognise, in some degree at least, the mistakes of the past. But much more typical has been an actual intensification of the negative passions of hatred for the present world. Consider a recent account of Britain in 1985 as seen from 1989:

> "On the heights of power, the wicked flourished their nuclear weapons and sang hymns to selfishness and greed. Below, the millions of the jobless and the poor bowed in surrender."[5]

It makes Ceausescu's Romania sound like a forward-looking society, does it not? But what such negative passion clearly signifies is that the supposedly scientific, or philosophical structural, analysis of ideologies is in the process of disappearing, as the ideological temperament retreats back to a world of righteousness which can be made safe from the falsifications of the real world.

The attractions of such a moralism consist in its providing an unchallengeable superiority and thus reconstituting the split level of the ideological world. The unchallengeable superiority of the partisan of the significantly named "Peace Movement" was that his aims were incontestably good, and this justified rudeness to the local residents of Greenham, the periodic destructions of the fence around the NATO base, and whatever else might seem to be dictated by a good cause. The fact that these activities might have had the terrifying effect of encouraging Soviet adventurism was a matter of no significance. The partisan of peace, whatever else might happen, was certainly in the right. Similarly, the elder statesmen (alias "eminent persons") who produced the Brandt Report quite seriously supported the idea that rich states should expend some fixed proportion of their GNP for overseas aid. To worry about the *effectiveness* of this aid, or to concern oneself with what the kleptocracies of the Third World might be doing with the taxpayers' cash was regarded as selfish, greedy, and petty-minded. The ideologist focused upon one aspect of a complex situation, dug in, and howled his (or her) righteousness to the world.

The subtler form of error, then, consists in combining the passion of righteousness with some social plan, and misunderstanding human reality in these terms. And the formulation of this Western error leads us directly to what I consider the most startling development in ideology in the last few decades: the ideological alliance with the Christian Churches.

MARX DECLARED war on religion, by which he meant Christianity, and for a century (with the exception of the odd Red Dean), Communism and Christianity were sworn enemies. Most ideologies, descending from the Enlightenment, take a similarly jaundiced view of religion as a cognitive competitor. In recent decades, however, much of Christianity has reversed itself in a manner little less dramatic, though longer drawn out, than the collapse of Communism itself. Christianity in Britain—at the level of Church leadership—has largely been taken over by public figures whom it is little exaggeration to describe as enemies of liberal democracy, and what has come to be uppermost in the minds of most senior clergymen seems to be something called "the Social Gospel". There are, indeed, exceptions to be considered presently; but the tendency I have described applies right across the spectrum of Christian belief. How do we explain it?

The basic reason is undoubtedly that the British Churches have suffered precisely the fate that has overtaken the Communist states of Eastern Europe: they are institutions based on beliefs which no one—at least, no one on high—takes seriously any more. It used to be a commonplace that Marxism in Eastern Europe was an empty creed. No one seriously believed any more in the nonsense about "class struggle" and the Communist and imperialist camps slugging it out in "the final conflict".

We widely recognised this fact without understanding how significant it was. Where we were certainly in error was in thinking that such institutional empty shells could be held together by mere power—the power of the Party. The reality would seem to be that institutions which lose their faith will soon abandon their identity. In the case of the Churches, awareness of a growing erosion of support in what Max Weber called a "disenchanted" world has led to the search for a new role. "Searching for a new role" is a typically bureaucratic expedient employed by those who manage an institution which is visibly under threat, and it often runs into resistance from the rank-and-file members who retain the original beliefs. It is certainly true that the British

[5] Neal Ascherson in *The Observer*, 29 October 1989.

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Churches are riven by splits between leaders eager to reform, as they conceive of reform, and ordinary churchgoers who do not like what is going on. The leaders wrestle with institutional imperatives (such as "the ecumenical movement" and "the ordination of women as priests"), while the laity just want to get on with their devotions. And part of the evidence for this reading of the situation lies in the fact that the Churches are these days celebrated not for their spiritual but for their political pronouncements.

IN DECEMBER 1989, for example, the Presbyterian Church issued a condemnation of the Government's proposals for student loans. These proposals are strange enough, in all conscience, and many Presbyterian elders may well have been impelled to make public their disapproval. But what is a *church* doing in the business of telling the government how it should conduct an educational policy of this rather specialised kind? It is not as if the pronouncement exhibited high intelligence or any special spiritual insight into the mysteries of the student loans proposals.

Earlier in the year, the new head of the Methodist Church, the Reverend John Vincent, had gone to town on Mrs Thatcher's famous off-the-cuff remark that "there is no such thing as society". He did so without the elementary courtesy—or should one say "charity", given that our context is religious—of wondering quite what she might have meant by it. He took it to be part of her Epistle to the Yuppies, to go out there and soak up wealth as greedily as may be, without concern for anyone who might get in the way. This was conspicuously not among the possible things she might have intended to convey, and the prospect of the head of a Church exercising his righteousness by flailing away at a straw man (in this case a straw woman) is unlikely to remain a proud memory in the annals of 20th-century Christianity. This was the same cleric, clearly ripening into one of the more eccentric public figures of the day, who, in full clerical garb, turned up on the steps of No. 10 Downing Street, demanding an audience with Mrs Thatcher in order that he might tell her she was not doing right by the poor. He was deeply miffed that she did not avail herself of this luminous privilege.

Rather more serious, however, given the fact of its establishment, are the Anglican pronouncements. In November 1989, as the Berlin Wall came tumbling down, the Archbishop of Canterbury journeyed to Strasbourg to tell the assembled parliamentarians of the European Community:

> "While it looks as if at the moment Communism has lost the battle for hearts and minds in Europe, it certainly cannot be said that Capitalism as a total world view has won."[6]

This parody of churchly even-handedness exhibits an error much more deadly than any of the syllabus I have listed above, because it completely mistakes the character of the modern world. The expression "Capitalism" has come to be used for what Marx called "bourgeois society". It thus referred to something which was evil, root and branch, a structure which must be torn up and replaced in a Communist revolution. Because of the popularity of Marxist views, the term "Capitalism" came to be used in far wider circles than those of Marxism, and people even began to produce *defences* of Capitalism, something which in Marxist terms is categorically impossible. But the whole idea of Capitalism rests upon a muddle, which confuses its logical grammar with that of the term "Communism". Communism is, in the fullest sense, a system: under Communist rule, the guiding party will determine a social plan of life for all members of the community. Now, in free liberal-democratic societies there is no single way of life or overriding set of values: rather, there is to be found an immense variety of ways of life sustained by individuals making their own decisions, individuals ordered only in terms of the abstractions of the law. The central point is that societies of this kind are *not* "systems" in the same sense as Communism is a system. Hence, to talk of Capitalism as coordinate with Communism is to misunderstand the difference between these two concepts. To suggest that "Capitalism" describes an entity which is "battling for the hearts and minds" of people is to compound the error. And the more Archbishop Runcie develops the idea, the worse the muddle grows.

WHAT HAS, in fact, happened is that the people who have overthrown Communist régimes (as it seems for the moment) came hurtling through the Berlin Wall to sniff the fresh air of freedom—basically the freedom to manage their own lives, to move physically where they choose, and to be free from tedious and mendacious indoctrination. "Capitalism" had nothing to do with it, except in the sense that the bulging shelves of a free society cannot but be attractive to people accustomed to the surliness and incompetence of Communist Party rule. Contemplating this situation, the Archbishop went on to remark that the triumph of "Capitalism" merely raised more questions

> ". . . about its capacity to be magnanimous in victory, to heed the cries of the poor at home and abroad, to seek the paths of peace and to care tenderly for the earth."

But there is no such thing as "Capitalism" which might act as an agent in carrying out these policies. There are only governments and individuals, either severally or collectively, and in a free society it is the plurality of these agencies in making different judgments about where the emphasis should lie which has made freedom so valuable and so resilient, by comparison with the *dirigiste* fantasies of Communism and—one must add—of the contemporary Christian Churches.

If the thing called "Capitalism" could actually heed the cries of the poor, etc., then presumably the Churches could shut up shop and go home. It would be the end of original sin. It is, in fact, the adversarial processes of Western society

[6] See the *Irish Times*, 24 November 1989. Cardinal Hume took a similar view. The collapse of Communism, he was reported in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 7 January 1990 as saying, was not "an affirmation of every aspect of Western society". Why should the Cardinal deny something it would be quite irrational to assert?

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which generate a continuous stream of self-criticism, on which churchly pontificating is merely parasitic, and which also accounts for our resilience. A "civil society", whose central component is the economy, is exactly the element of modern life which the social gospel of the Churches seeks to abolish. In similarly destroying the economy and replacing it with administrative command (in the name of creating the benefits for the poor which churchmen so admire), Communist rulers destroyed all social initiative except that of criminals, and it will take at least a generation before the populations of these miserable countries recover.

What churchmen do not seem to understand is that a free community rests upon a tripartite structure: state, civil society, and rights-bearing individuals, and it can be starkly contrasted with Communism whose aim is to create a "society" which expresses (in aspiration at least) a *single* system of values.

IF THIS ANALYSIS is correct, then to talk about Britain as a "society" in this sense is to impose a Communist model of thought upon free liberal-democratic states which are vastly more complex. Mrs Thatcher's famous remark about there being no such thing as society was an off-the-cuff comment, but her instinct in this matter was, in my view, good. There is no such thing as society in the sense of an active agent determining what happens, because the only *agents* we who are free can recognise are governments, individuals, and the organisations of a civil society.

It follows that when political activists apply to the noun "society" such predicates as "greedy" or "caring", they are saying something distinctly odd. They cannot mean that in a "caring" society each individual is caring in all his social relations; at least, they had better not, because it would be palpably absurd. Are they, then, making a statistical generalisation about the quality or the quantum of social relations? If so, they never produce any serious evidence of a statistical kind. I suggest that what the term "society" actually means here is "set of social facts resulting from a social plan". To say, as many Churchmen have, that "the Thatcherite society" of the 1980s is "greedy" is to say that Mrs Thatcher's Government seeks to determine individual behaviour according to a social plan, which is implemented partly in legislation (such as lowering marginal tax rates, or cutting welfare benefits) and partly by supposed "messages" and "signals" emanating in a coded way from speeches in which there is a great to-do about "wealth-creation".

Churchmen read these speeches as incitements to selfishness. We may leave aside the fact that this is a perverse misreading of Mrs Thatcher's evident intentions in order to emphasise that it is a misreading which ignores the fact that modern Britain, not being a totalitarian state, cannot be planned in this way. There is nothing in modern Britain which compels anyone to behave greedily or selfishly. (Even Nigel Lawson's reduction in income taxes could be "rectified" by the equivalent of a contribution to charities and cultural foundations on the part of the well-to-do "caring" classes.)

And all of this rhetoric is especially pernicious from a Christian point of view because it does not take individuals seriously as moral agents. It makes the totalitarian assumption that human beings are so feeble as to be nothing more than the creatures of their social influences.

SUCH AN ASSUMPTION is not only false—is it not a complete betrayal of the entire Christian tradition from which, alone among the world's major religions, individualism has emerged? Within this tradition, custom has steadily given way to morality, in the sense of conduct guided by relatively self-conscious principles. It has been the mission of the Christian Church to be the custodian of morals and manners understood in precisely this way, as an arena of individual responsibility. Such an understanding has always distinguished between the spirit and the letter, and given equal importance to both. The central business of religious services would seem to be to exercise the spirit and inspire actions corresponding to our moral obligations, including charity to the poor and care for communal life, including indeed much of what today appears in the jargon of rational choice as "public goods".

Over the past century, the Churches have seen governments take over many of their functions. They have even been so acquiescent in this socialising process as to construe the Welfare State as if it were a moral triumph for the whole of British "society". Large sections of the Churches have accepted a role as a kind of junior partner to the Welfare aspects of government, only making their voices felt with uplifting echoes about the need to spend more. It is in drifting into this role that they have subverted the entire moral enterprise of their religion.

They have done this by substituting sentimentalism—a version of spirit—for the letter of morality. The test of righteousness becomes giving to "the poor" from which all moral navigation in contemporary Christian theology takes its bearings, and such giving is the only proof of the cardinal virtues of caring and compassion. "The poor" is a loose category whose confusion with ideological categories of exploitation has led the Churches into conniving with murderers and torturers—as when Christian charities have got themselves mixed up with violent Third World liberation movements. But quite apart from scandal of this kind, "the poor" have exercised a profoundly distorting effect upon Christian thought. One set of people—"the poor"—has been entrenched as exclusively the bearer of rights because, being the "products" of "society", its behaviour cannot be morally judged. Another set of people—the rest of us, sometimes described as "the rich" and usually sneered at as "the comfortable"—has, exclusively, duties. The Churches have thus abandoned the spiritual vantage-point from which, in terms of the recognition that all men are sinners, they might excoriate the rich for their self-indulgence and the poor for their indolence and self-pity. They have come down in favour of a banal political partisanship in which they add nothing whatever to the positions already being argued by everyday politicians and conventional ideologists.

Sentimentalism as a substitute for morality means abandoning a clear conception of acceptably polite and moral behaviour in favour of a schedule of approved emotions.

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"Caring, sharing . . . compassion" have become so much the standard patter of this tendency as virtually to replace the Trinity in the attention of Christian churchmen, who do not seem to be aware that there is no necessary connection between a sentiment and an act. Compassion, for example, can sometimes lead us to kill, and seems increasingly to be doing so. More striking still is the celebration of anger and indignation, which justifies even the disorderly behaviour of students who jostle, shout, scream and spit at politicians of whom they disapprove. Is this the virtue of sincerity, one wonders, or are they merely brutish by nature?

The egregious Bishop Huddlestone seems to believe in the fashionable doctrine that what we need is more anger—he really means righteous indignation—at the way the poor "are treated" in our society. The common opinion in the past has been that anger makes people violent and mindless; but it was, I think, feminists who launched this kind of "designer anger"—anger which is aggressively self-approving. They invented the slogan "Women Are Angry". The doctrine appears to be that it is only anger that gets things done, and an activist Church, whose understanding of the way we should live seems now to be dominated by the notion of social planning, has found the idea irresistibly attractive.

WHY DO I THINK it relevant to consider the present position of the Christian Churches in exploring the future development of ideologies? The active Christian population, after all, is relatively small, and the direct influence of the Churches pretty slight. My answer is twofold.

The first is that the Christian Churches are a mighty well of righteousness, and it is easy to predict that in proportion, as socialist allegiance loses in practical plausibility, the more it will wax in righteousness. The key to understanding the pleasures of ideological commitment is that it both creates and mollifies every possible form of guilt. Anyone susceptible to its attractions will find materials for guilt in the history of Europe, especially in its relations with the Third World. They will find such materials also in the effects of technology upon the planet, and in the inequalities of contemporary society. But an ideological commitment no sooner calls up these immense reserves of guilt than it assuages them in the righteousness of its adversariality. There is, in fact, no great mystery about socialism's imperviousness to the evidence of practical defects. Socialist invulnerability to falsification lies in the fact that a socialist commitment in a Western liberal-democratic country has never quite been what it seems. It looks like a policy commitment on all fours with all the other practical commitments espoused in liberal-democratic societies, *except* for the small detail that it seeks not to remedy this-or-that defect, but rather to transform society as a whole.

If it were merely a policy commitment, then the assemblage of evidence that socialism is not a serious practical policy for a modern state would lead to a vast falling away of support for socialism and similar ideologies. Although support has certainly diminished, collectivist commitment has remained remarkably consistent, however quiet it currently may be. The reason, I have suggested, is that socialism is something different from a practical policy commitment. It is, rather, a moral posture allowing its exponents the pleasures of being both within a liberal-democratic society, and yet also outside it.

SOCIALISTS, like feminists and other ideologists, are basically committed not to any positive improvement in the human condition, but to the pleasure of struggle against the world in which they live. This is the reason why, during periods of intense ideological conflict, although those who hated Communism would take all manner of risks to escape it and often paid with their lives for their commitment, Western socialists never for a moment contemplated fleeing to the socialism which, in principle, they so much admired. Nothing stopped them from setting up socialist communes within capitalist societies, but few did so. What they sought, rather, was total power to impose their scheme on others, rather than actually to live a socialist life. The real pleasures of socialism obviously lay in struggling, or in dominating. A socialist life was widely recognised by many socialists (including Marx) as not really suitable for themselves. Hence the inescapable revelation from Eastern Europe that living under socialism is profoundly boring and impoverished is hardly likely to affect Western socialists. It was not a fate which, in their *mauvaise foi*, they had ever imagined for themselves.

The relevant law of ideological being would seem to be that the less plausible any ideological reconstruction of society comes to seem, the more enthusiastically will ideologists rush for the higher ground. They will identify themselves with Peace, Nature, Rights, Compassion, etc.—and take up an enthusiastically negative posture towards the established society in which they live. What corresponds to this tendency is a melodrama in which the present society and its supporters are understood not as people with different opinions, but as bearers of moral evil—as greedy, hard-hearted, warmongering, and the like. And to say that this melodrama will get hotter in the 1990s is merely to say that what has already been happening in the '80s will continue.

It is in terms of this melodrama that the transformation of the Church bureaucracies in the West becomes significant. The basic Christian doctrine of "original sin" tends to put a brake on the melodramatic construction of human affairs, while the conception of an after-life takes some of the heat out of contemporary political disputes. It puts such disputes in perspective. This is precisely the reason why Marx was clear that Christian belief had to be destroyed. The social gospel destroys both of these beneficent effects, and it mobilises the Churches' immense resources of righteousness behind precisely the kind of political movement which, as it happens, has immiserated the populations of both the Second and Third Worlds.

THE SECOND REASON why the collapse of Christianity into a Social Gospel will have serious consequences for the future lies in the fact that it removes one more barrier to the prevalent rationalism in Western societies. Marxism is but a

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peculiarly violent branch of such rationalism, and the irony is that its evident absurdities have protected the deeper sources of rationalism from having been seriously damaged by its collapse. The basic point is that belief in magic in Western Europe never disappeared. It merely focused on less superstitious sources of power than mumbling shamans —i.e., scientific knowledge and political sovereignty. The basic superstition of the West is the belief that to every problem there corresponds a solution which can be provided by science in the service of the state. Democracy is, in this context, a peculiarly dangerous doctrine because the *demos* is prone to lose sight of constitutionality and to urge governments to take whatever powers are thought to be necessary to stamp out whatever is believed to be the current evil. We rightly shudder at what totalitarianism did to families, but there are remarkably few private spaces left for family life in contemporary society. Many voices urge "professionals" to take over more and more counselling and managing work and play in our daily lives.

But it is in sharpening the question of "the poor" that the Churches have played a significant part in turning political discussion ideological. "The poor" are an extraordinarily miscellaneous class in the community, and their numbers and significance are at the mercy of the latest plausible social theory. Middle-class intellectuals, including Karl Marx above all, found this abstract class irresistible because it could serve as a ventriloquial dummy, allowing a kind of pseudo-politics in which Revolutionaries, Bishops, Intellectuals and other non-elected and thus unrepresentative people could confidently advance themselves as a species of high-minded spokesmen demanding the opportunity to expend other people's resources. Because they are construed in terms of victimhood, the poor are the only class of person in modern society who can elicit an almost automatic genuflection from the public at large; and they thus constitute an indispensable resource in the cultivation of righteousness. They are all the more irresistible because, as the New Testament clearly indicated, they will always be with us. When Christianity was strong and vital, the Churches were in no doubt that the organisation of charity (like the organisation of education) was a basically ecclesiastical prerogative. In its decline, however, the Churches have gone over to surrogates. The proof of the community's love and charity is to be found, not in the money and time which individuals and Churches expend on the poor in helping them to become, where possible, resourceful and self-dependent members of the community, but in the invocation of the power and resources of the state to provide money and professional managers for a class of permanent pensioners. The Churches, in other words, having themselves become a bureaucratic interest, work to sustain the bureaucratic interest throughout the modern State.

THIS MAY SEEM to be a hard judgment, but there are good reasons for recognising a certain brutishness in the way in which the new Christian bureaucracies operate. The new social gospel sentimentalises Christianity in terms of benign or necessary emotions such as compassion and anger, to the exclusion of the concern with explicit duties and obligations. Bishop Huddlestone is clearly not a man who would stand in the way of what a righteous anger on behalf of the poor might consider necessary, any more than British university radicals count civility and courtesy as important when protesting against the campus presence of Ministers of Mrs Thatcher's government. Again, when one of the leaders of the Presbyterian Church writes that:

> "The shuffling around of shares in order to make yourself a fortune in a fortnight is not wealth creation, it's just making money. . ."[7]

he may seem merely to be uttering one of the clichés of modern righteousness, but is implicitly arrogating to himself the right to determine what shall be considered valuable. But perhaps the most remarkable example of the degene ration of Christian morality can be seen, I think, in the view of fundamentalism taken by the Principal of Heythrop College in the University of London, the Reverend Brendan Callaghan.

I have distinguished, in this argument, between the bureaucracies of the British Churches and the laity, many of whom are very distant in sympathy from these developments. Many of the relevant laity tend to "fundamentalism", taking the Bible itself as their guide in a time when the institutions themselves seem to wobble and shake. Fundamentalism may thus be taken, however disreputable it may be in intellectual circles, as the emblem of a rebellious laity not willing to be led by the nose through bureaucratic hoops. It is this problem to which the Reverend Brendan Callaghan addressed himself recently,[8] and the interesting feature of his argument is the way in which the espousal of a critical and questioning academic spirit became the vehicle for an essay in pure domination. The Principal of Heythrop College is in favour of something called "openness"—and when people in conversation declare themselves in favour of being open-minded, one should usually stand by for waves of unargued passion. In this case, we find fundamentalism juxtaposed against "critical openness" and stigmatised with remarkable thoroughness. It is said to be neurotic, fanatical, nothing but the result of "an *inability* [my italics] to tolerate the possibility of alternative ways of looking at important issues", as appealing "to those infantile desires for total dependency which we mostly grow out of", and as containing "the anger and destructive defensiveness that are the marks of a threatened neurotic structure". Some openness we have here!

This is a remarkable piece of polemic, and what is most

[7] The Very Reverend James White, as reported in the *Irish Times*, 24 November 1989.

[8] The Reverend Brendan Callaghan in *The Times*, 18 November 1989. The Roman Catholic Church, possibly because of its South American connections, seems to have succumbed especially dangerously to the social gospel. Thus, after a familiar denunciation of the West (including the iconic sheen about "an empire of evil"), a writer in *The Tablet* of 6 January 1990 asks: ". . . is it too much to ask that they [Christian organisations labouring for peace and justice] should . . . shake our pious complacency, by uttering unwelcome truths?" Piety seems to have become an attitude to be despised in these circles.

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"A Stag at Sharkey's", George Bellows, 1917.

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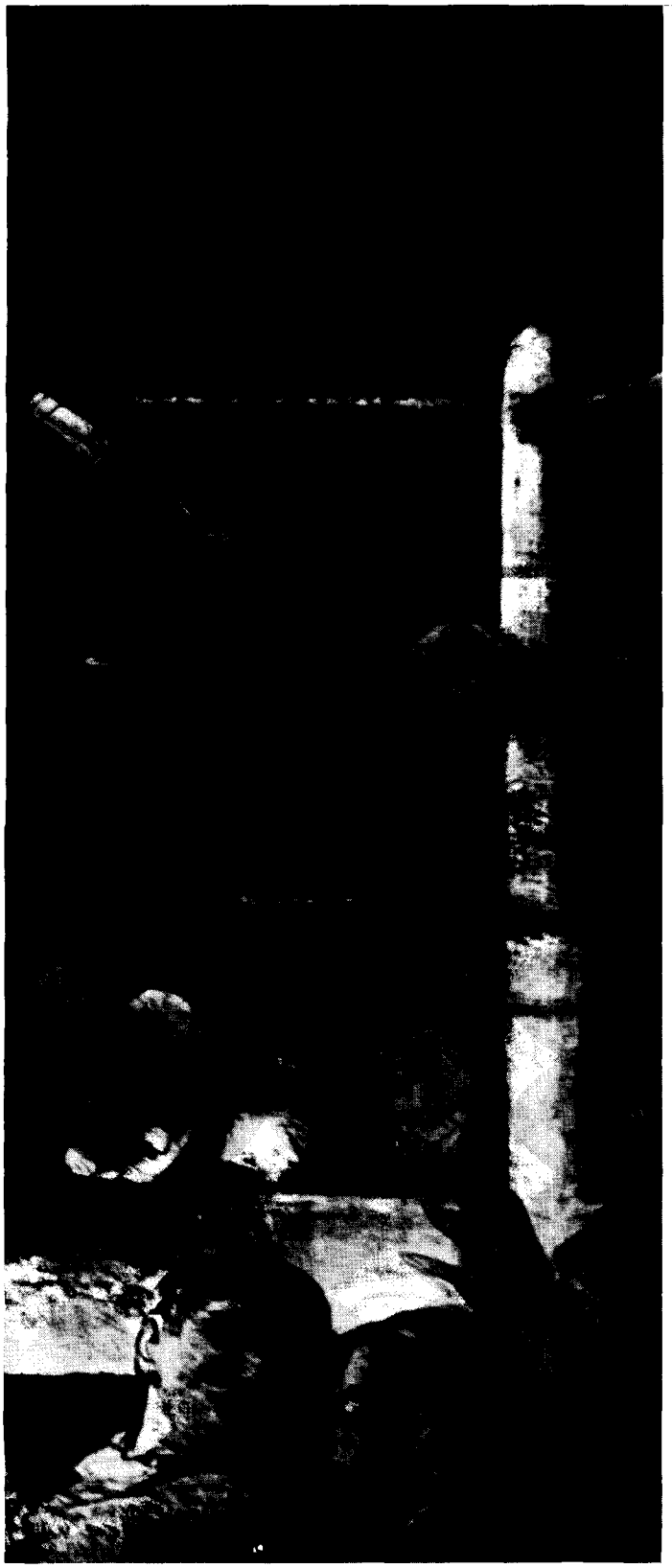
with a four-letter word:

Guts.



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remarkable is that no notice was taken of it. Yet it is an astonishing example of the way in which liberal slogans can be turned to the purposes not merely of attempting to dominate but actually to annihilating another tendency of thought. And the point is that, as in ideological polemic, but by contrast with the *caritas* one might expect between Christians, the Reverend Brendan Callaghan has completey dehumanised those of whose opinions he disapproves. They cease to be reasoning beings and turn into pathologies. This kind of immense, patronising superiority replicates the attitude of many an East Coast liberal towards the inhabitants of the American Bible belt. Coming from a prominent member of a Christian Church, it is inescapably a demand for submission.

A Christian Church which had not succumbed to these secular fashions long ago created the cognitive conditions out of which the modern world grew; and it long played an independent role as a limit on the prevailing technological rationalism of modern societies. It played this role above all in its hostility to ideologies like Communism and Feminism, which were unmistakably hostile to Christianity and which, in power, bent every effort to stamp it out. The present alliance between Christianity and Marxism is the clearest possible indication that many Christians cannot even recognise when they are about to be devoured.

With the collapse of Christianity, a wounded but far from dead contemporary ideology is in the process of receiving a significant blood transfusion.

The Reunion

We assemble, in the long library,
The scent in the beeswax of the polish
Of which is precisely unchanged, and
Exchange, over dinner, surfaces,
Contrasted marriages and careers;
While we are sober we do not look
Too near the grain
For fear of harsher weathering.

The solicitors have worn dark and safe, their secrets
Locked in boxes lettered white on black.
The bankers have taken a high veneer;
They bellow bond-issues at each other
Point out honours on boards
Put down sons on ten-year plans.
The doctors' eyes have seen fifteen years'
Pain, and have not come to discuss it.

I recognise only the face of the engraver,
The gouger of glowing copper. There
I see ravages—seams of work worn out,
New workings, going deeper
For deeper ore.
His work has taught him time—
The shortness of it, the disciplined
Desperation of working in a corroding
Medium, with hands that will not
Always be steady, the challenge of the virgin
Surface, so easily sinned on.

We are drunk now, flushed
With the wine that used to be forbidden.
We talk arthritis, debt,
And thirty-year sentences—
Terms of mediocrity.

We are etched, all of us,
Unvirgin, imprecise alloys,
By the royal acid of the will of God.
But for morning Chapel,
Tomorrow, at eleven,
Our masks will be safely on.

Christopher Southgate

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Russell Hoban

Schwartz

I'D BEEN stuck for months—no ideas that went anywhere. Then suddenly things started moving again. I always have music going while I work, and when I put on Miles Davis Blue Note Vol. 1 that morning it sounded different, as if there were good places ahead. I did almost two pages of something that looked promising and I scribbled notes with ideas for later.

After lunch I thought, things being in such good shape, why didn't I go to Tottenham Court Road and get some blank four-hour videotapes, then drop in at Virgin for a couple of Jimmy Smith cassettes and see if they had Sun Ra—I liked his rendition of *Round about Midnight*.

In the underground I read the Bernard Malamud short story, "The Jewbird", shaking my head and thinking, What a writer. He makes it look so easy, as if all you have to do is let good things come into your head and then just tell them however they want to be told. When I came out of the train in Tottenham Court Road tube station there was a short white saxophonist playing *Ornithology* like a suitor trying to bend the bow of Odysseus. I gave him 20 pence.

I bought the videotapes at Hi-Fi Care and then I went to Great Russell Street for a look at the bookshops before going to Virgin. In the entrance of Collet's Chinese I saw on the wall by the door a handsome chart, THE CHINESE RADICALS: *The 214 Index Characters of the Kang Hsi Dictionary*. It was startling in its beauty and compactness. Here, in ten rows, were single characters for *Rain*, *Moon*, *Evil*, *Mountain*—all manner of concrete and conceptual words with which to image a whole world. The characters were grouped according to the number of brush-strokes that composed them. They seemed magical, as if the physical act of making the strokes in black ink on white paper had the power of calling up the physical being of what the character represented. Some of the sequences seemed already to be telling stories: in a three-stroke row, character 37, *Great*, was followed by *Woman*, *Child*, *Roof*, *Inch*, *Small*, *Lame*, *crooked*, then *Corpse*. In a five-stroke row, character 109, *Eye*, was followed by *Lance*, *Arrow*, *Stone*, and *Spirit*.

I ran my finger over the characters from *Great* to *Corpse*. In the whiteness between the black brushstrokes there seemed a distant place, another time, a face not clearly seen. Geography doesn't apply, I thought. *Great* was a man-shape (why great?), a plain bare forked creature moving towards *Woman* who, waiting with outstretched arms, took his man-shape into herself. *Child* followed, with a hook like an anchor. Did they all live under one (very modest) *Roof*? No, the dwelling was *Inch*, it was *Small*, nothing that would hold *Great*. *Child* (a boy, judging by its similarity to *Great*), was *Lame*, *crooked*, then *Corpse*. Sad. After *Corpse* came *Sprout*, the grass growing on the child's grave. Then *Mountain*, then *Stream*, pointed ripples. Did *Mountain* and *Stream* have any significance for *Great*? He returned to his *Work*, his concerns of *Self*. All this in characters 37 to 49 on the chart.

I came back from wherever I'd been, bought a copy of the chart and left the shop. As I continued east on Great Russell Street I became aware of something a little behind me and to my left, and I heard a smacking sound as of wet feet on the pavement. When I turned, whatever I saw out of the corner of my eye was blurred and gone before I had a proper look. I decided not to go into Probsthain's, the next bookshop, but crossed the road and headed for the British Museum.

People eating ice-cream strolled in and out of the gates while behind me the wet footfalls continued. On the museum steps in the August sunlight sat girls from everywhere, with beckoning bare legs inviting the approacher to the darkness within, the coolness of marble, the excitement of stone, the persistence of ideas. As I went up the steps I didn't look behind me but I still heard the smack of wet feet. How could feet stay wet for such a long time on hot dry paving? I turned suddenly but saw only the girls from everywhere.

I WENT INSIDE. I didn't know what I was looking for but I'd know it when I saw it. I didn't want huge winged bulls from Persepolis with bearded human faces, I didn't want the lion-hunt reliefs in the Assyrian Saloon, and I didn't want either colossal or non-colossal Egyptian statues. I looked in on the Elgin marbles but they were of no use to me this time. I went up the stairs, drifted urgently through South

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Arabia, Nimrud Ivories, and Syria, turned left at Pottery and Small Objects, headed north through Daily Life and Coptic Art, west through Temporary Prints and Drawings, and found myself in Oriental Antiquities standing in front of a black stone lion. Oh, I said. You.

There wasn't much light on its blackness, the lion was mostly in shadow where it sat on its plinth, somewhat bigger than a large dog and showing its teeth in a ready grimace. There was no air between the front legs and the back legs, the whole lion was one with the stone, its form compact and simplified, its posture humped and ready; the shape of it was the shape of readiness, more mass than detail—there was hardly any detail, only the black stone bulk of the lion manifesting its steadfast willingness to encounter whatever might come at it. This was not a lion by artifice, it had lived unseen in the stone until the sculptor's chisel took away its hiddenness and the lion, grimacing, was exposed to view. FIGURE OF A GUARDIAN LION FROM A TOMB AVENUE, said the card—SUNG DYNASTY, AD 960-1279.

"Don't touch the exhibit", said the guard as I lifted my hands to the lion's shoulders.

I moved away and looked at the T'ang Dynasty horses for a while. When the guard was elsewhere I went back to the lion. I had my Walkman in my shoulder-bag, in it was a cassette of the Thelonious Monk quartet on its 1961 European tour—Charlie Rouse tenor sax, John Ore bass, Frankie Dunlop drums. The tape was at the end of *Round about Midnight* and just about to begin *Blue Monk*. I put the headphones on the lion's head and started the music. I had my left hand on the lion's head, and when I felt the stone begin to hum I took off the headphones.

The lion blurred, the floor shook a little and several people, noticing perhaps some disturbance in the air, turned to look as we walked away. On the plinth there was still a lion that could be seen and touched but the stone was empty.

We went down the stairs, crossed the crowded and echoing space to the entrance, and went out to the brilliant sunlight and the girls from everywhere, now seen from behind or in profile. As we passed through them I looked back. Their motion was arrested, their voices were swallowed up in silence; the girls from everywhere, dropping all pretence of the ordinary, became shadowy in the sunlight, became mystery.

I WANT TO HEAR the rest of that music, said the invisible incorporeal essence of the black stone lion as we turned down Great Russell Street towards Tottenham Court Road. We talked mind to mind, no one else could hear us.

I can't very well hang headphones on empty air, I said.

If you put them on your head I can listen through you, said the lion.

I don't want to. There's something else I'm listening for.

What's that?

Something following me.

Is that why you came to me?

I don't know.

Yes, you do, You don't like being followed, it bothers you?

Well, I'd rather not be followed by anything too blurry.

Don't worry about it.

Why not?

There are blurry things following everybody, that's the human condition.

How come I never noticed this one before, then?

Nobody can notice everything, it's too much, it would drive you crazy.

Anyhow I'd like to keep listening for it if you don't mind.

Please yourself. Who are you at present?

I'm who I've always been, Harry Stone.

Always is a long time. Before you were Stone you were Stein, right?

Right.

And before that?

Unborn.

Unborn as Stein, you mean.

Whatever. And you?

Schwartz. No first name, just Schwartz.

Same name as Malamud's Jewbird.

There's a lot of it about.

Odd name for a Chinese lion.

Actually I'm Jewish.

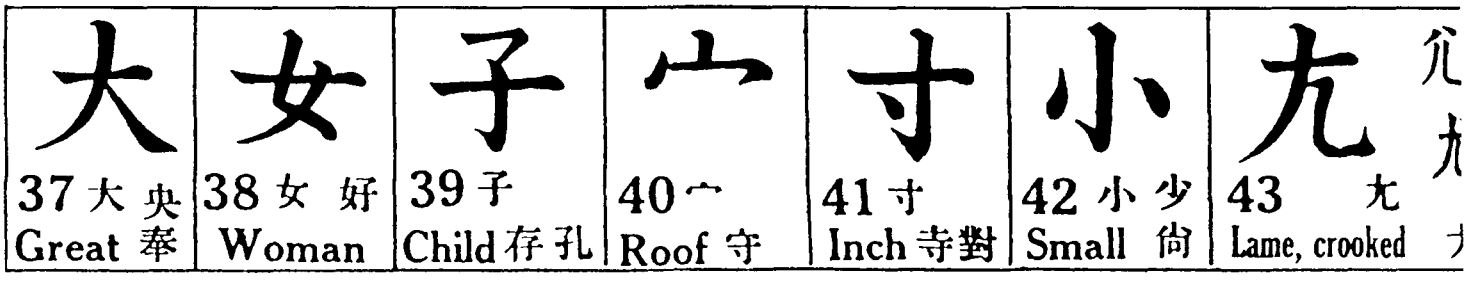
How can a Sung Dynasty tomb guardian be Jewish?

You know how it is with immigrants—we get the dirty jobs.

What's dirty about being a tomb guardian?

It's a matter of whose tomb you're guarding, isn't it.

And whose tomb were you guarding?



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A cabinet minister's. I'm still on duty, it's a permanent post.

You're a long way from China.

So are you, but geography doesn't apply in these matters. Whose tomb do you think I'm guarding?

I've no idea. How could I?

I was assigned to the Minister of Drains and Gutters. Does that ring a bell?

No. Should it?

Yes, it should.

Why's that?

Because the Minister of Drains and Gutters is you and it's your tomb I'm guarding, that's why.

My tomb!

Well, I say "tomb" because that's what one says. What I actually look after is the idea of you. The world is a fabric of ideas; each thing lives in a particular idea that lives in it. These ideas aren't always what you might expect. Take such a thing as a roof, for example; perhaps the idea of it is not the shelter it gives but the shelter it doesn't give. Or a mountain, the idea of it might not be the immensity of it but the smallness of what isn't mountain. Or a stream, the idea of it might not be the constant motion of the water but a moment of it that stops and does not move on. The idea of you of course is free flow.

Free flow! But I'm not the Minister of Drains and Gutters.

All right, so maybe you've taken up something new. I wonder if I can guess what you are now? Something in the arts, am I right?

I'm a writer.

Well, there you are, it's the same thing, isn't it.

What's the same thing?

What you do. A Minister of Drains and Gutters has to keep things flowing freely in and out and so does a writer, only the writer does it with ideas and the Minister does it with other things. So it's not really a big change for you.

Listen, Schwartz, I said. . . . Then I heard the wet feet on the pavement again. Listen, do you hear that?

Certainly I hear it.

Well, why is it following me? What does it want?

Don't you know?

No, I don't.

Why don't you ask her, then?

"Her"?

"It", then, if you like. But it's the it of her.

Of whom? I thought. But I didn't really want to know. Why can't I see this it of her? I said. Every time I turn around there's only a blur that I see out of the corner of my eye.

She was always very humble, you know. She probably isn't quite able to face you.

Maybe I'm not able to face her either.

Why not?

Maybe I just don't want to.

Why not?

Why don't you stop asking questions and do a little guarding, I wanted to say but I didn't. Life is hard enough without extra bother, I said lamely. We were at Tottenham Court Road tube station then; we went down the stairs and I bought a ticket for Schwartz, I didn't want to cheat anybody in any way on this particular day.

In the corridor we passed a tall black saxophonist with dreadlocks and a tremendous red and yellow and blue cap like a knitted Greek Orthodox church dome. He was playing *Blue Monk* with a Monk tape for backing. I gave him 20 pence and Schwartz insisted on stopping to listen.

I wanted to get home; the dusk was beginning to gather, the day was ending. You can hear *Blue Monk* at my place, I said.

Not as played by this strange holy man on his wonderful machine, said Schwartz. This is the free flow of the present moment.

Do you always have to go with the flow?

Yes.

So we stood and listened while the rush hour flowed around us. The saxophonist seemed suspicious of our attention but carried on playing none the less.

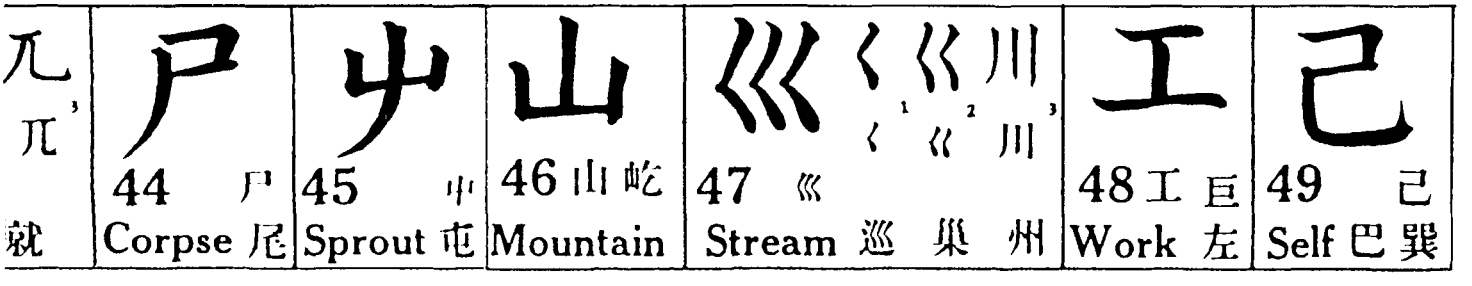
IN DUE COURSE we arrived at the platform and waited for our train. After a few minutes the black air of the tunnel rushed towards us and the rails began to wince as a distant rumble grew louder.

Schwartz growled as the waiting crowd pressed forward towards the edge where white light slid along the rails below us.

Why are you growling? I said.

The air is full of trouble.

That's our train, we have to ride in it; it's part of the free flow of the present moment.



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The darkness opened and like a shriek the train filled up the tunnel, the doors slid back, and we got on. Once inside, we stood in the crush without talking, Schwartz occupying no space whatever. Strange, I thought, as our carriage shook and rattled through the darkness: here I was travelling with a Sung Dynasty tomb guardian who liked Thelonious Monk and probably nobody knew it but me. I looked at the faces packed around me with new interest, wondering whom some of these people might be travelling with; wondering, indeed, whether anyone ever travelled alone. Sometimes I thought I saw the blurred face, sometimes not.

Under the fluorescent brightness that was neither day nor night I saw in the faces around me the darkening of the unseen sky. With the fading of the day came the little tribunal of the dusk. I sat at the bench as judge and I stood in the dock as the accused. No one spoke for the defence because there was no defence.

The doors of the past opened and they came in, the faces and the places, the words spoken and unspoken, the roads travelled, the tears and the partings.

At certain times in your life you did what you did, I the judge said to the accused. You, Harold Stone, did this and this and this.

Yes, I said to the judge, I did.

How do you find? I the judge said to the faces and the places, the words, the roads, the tears, the partings.

Guilty.

How do you find? I said to the accused.

Guilty, I answered from the dock.

You are condemned to regret. Do you so condemn?

I so condemn.

Do you recognise the power and the authority of regret?

I do.

Followers will be appointed, those who pursue and those who exact what is due. Do you accept this?

The doors opened. Schwartz and I and others left the train, walked up the stairs and out under pinky-orange street lamps and a violet sky. Behind us came the footfalls.

AT HOME we sat in the living-room with none of the lamps switched on. Twilight filled the room like dark waters from far away. I put *Blue Monk* on the tape deck. The music impeccably shaped its angles in the darkening room, at the same time sculpting the duplicate lion of itself and reproducing moments lived silently in real time by real people: the breathing of the musicians and the audience, the beating of their hearts and the circulation of their blood were in the moments imitated by the magnetised particles on the tape; if there had been a fly sitting on Monk's hat while he played, its tiny presence was copied in the recorded music; if it had been raining at the time of the concert, the unseen wet and shining streets, the reflections of headlamps and tail lights, street lamps and traffic lights, the unheard hiss of tyres and the sound of the rain, all were in the simulacrum concert on the tape. Was the double helix of each of us, I wondered, a recording of all the lives before us?

Who was she? I said to Schwartz.

In the light of the street lamp outside the window Schwartz made himself visible, black and humped and grimacing in the room that was dark now except for the little red diodes on the amplifier and the tape deck. I don't remember her name, he said. She was a small woman and very humble. She had never been outside her village in the remote province where she lived. She had never seen anyone so splendidly dressed as you, so important and with a retinue of servants and soldiers and carrying documents from the Emperor. Did you make promises?

It wasn't I, I said. You're confusing me with someone else.

Does it matter?

What kind of sophistry is that? Of course it matters. Why don't you find the Minister of Drains and Gutters and tell him all this that you're telling me?

Bodies rot, spirits fade. It's been a very long time.

So you admit you've got the wrong man!

No, you're the right man. Even if you're not the one who was the Minister of Drains and Gutters, you're the one for whom I guard and preserve the idea of free flow.

It's the idea that you're guarding, not me.

Not you but the idea. We're both Jews, you and I; we are of the people who make no images of God; we are of the people for whom God is idea and Idea is god. Do you accept that?

Uncertain, I stood silent in the dock.

Look at me.

I looked at him, looked through the darkness into the black stone of his eyes that pierced me like lances, like arrows, going from the spirit of the stone into the stone of my spirit.

There were others before you, said Schwartz, and there will be others after you. How much does it matter who did what? What was done was done and must flow freely. The woman waited and you never returned; there was a child and he died. She waited until the second winter, then she walked by a mountain stream, walked by the deep and rushing water.

And now?

She would like not to be alone any more, she asks only a little look of recognition, a little word of welcome and affection.

One more follower.

Surely you can take on one more?

All right then. Let her come.

Blue Monk, always full of lift, seemed to lift a little more. The footsteps, when I heard them, sounded different, as if her feet were dry now.

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John Grigg

Nobility & War

The Unselfish Commitment?

WHICH OF THE TWO World Wars of this century (and no other century has had a war on the global scale) was the nobler, so far as Britain was concerned? By "Britain" I mean not just the United Kingdom, but the British Empire and Commonwealth which participated in both Wars from start to finish. What do I mean by "nobler"? Among various definitions of the word "noble" in the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, the applicable one is this:

> "Having high moral qualities or ideals; of a great or lofty character; proceeding from, characteristic of, indicating or displaying, greatness of character or moral superiority."

Which of the two World Wars was waged, on Britain's part, in the more idealistic spirit and with the higher regard for moral values?

There is, I think, a broad consensus or conventional wisdom in Britain today to the effect that the War of 1914-18 was one in which the country became involved for old-fashioned "balance-of-power" reasons; that it was a singularly nasty and costly war; and that it served no good purpose. The War of 1939-45, on the other hand, was a genuine crusade against evil, fought not only more intelligently but also more humanely, and it may have succeeded, where the earlier War certainly failed, in making the world, or at any rate some parts of it, safe for democracy. Another notion that became fashionable in 1940, and has remained so ever since, is that World War II was, for Britain, "a people's war", whereas in the first the people's true interests were not at stake, though their emotions were worked on to produce a mood of "thoughtless patriotism" (as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, put it in his Gallipoli Lecture).[1]

A classic statement of this view, in a book which helped to establish it in the public mind, is the following passage from Francis Williams's *War by Revolution*, published in November 1940:

> "This war is a revolutionary war. If it is fought as a national war for the victory of Britain and the established interests of Britain it will in the end be lost. If it is fought as a war of democratic revolution in Europe it can be won. Let no one doubt its revolutionary nature. This is not a struggle between national interests, a battle to decide the balance of power within an established and accepted order of world society. It is a civil war within Western Civilization and upon its issue depends the total shape of the future."

We can see here all the ingredients in what was to become a powerful myth: that Britain was not fighting a war in defence of its own vital interests, but a revolutionary war on behalf of democracy; that the idea of a balance of power was obsolete and discredited; and that the old international order based on nation-states would have to give way to something entirely new.

IN POST-WAR Britain nothing, perhaps, has done more to propagate and perpetuate an unfavourable view of World War I than the musical *Oh What a Lovely War*, which was turned into a highly successful film. The message there is similar to that of Francis Williams's book, though with a more explicitly Marxist flavour; and it is conveyed to the beguiling accompaniment of World War I songs. The process of myth-making has been further assisted by a growing ignorance of history, affecting not only the general public but, more critically, the rulers of the country, in whom at least a modicum of historical knowledge used to be normal. (The extent to which politicians are now ignorant of the past is, surely, one of the most disturbing features of our time.

JOHN GRIGG, *who served in the Grenadier Guards from 1943-45, is the author of "1943: The Victory That Never Was" (Eyre Methuen, 1980). His other works include three volumes of Lloyd George biography (1973, 1978, 1985), two of which won, respectively, the Whitbread Award and the Wolfson Literary Prize, and a biography of Nancy Astor (1985). His article is a slightly edited version of the 1989 Gallipoli Memorial Lecture, "Britain's Nobler War: 1914-1918 or 1939-1945?", which he gave in the Royal Garrison Church at Woolwich in April 1989.*

[1] Dr Robert Runcie, "The God of Battles and the Fight for Faith", Gallipoli Memorial Lecture, 1988.

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When the state is run by people who know no history, it becomes like an individual without memory—but with this difference: that whereas everybody recognises personal amnesia as a terrible handicap, few seem to be aware that the same is true of collective or institutional amnesia.)

IT MAY ALREADY be apparent that I regard the popular view of World War I, and of Britain's role in it, as historically flawed. And it is probably no less apparent that I am sceptical of any attempt to describe World War II as different in kind and morally superior. I shall, indeed, be arguing that such valid contrasts as can be drawn between the two Wars tend to favour the first rather than the second; and that most of the contrasts now commonly drawn are not valid at all.

Let me consider, first, Britain's motivation for war in 1914 and 1939. On the earlier occasion, the Liberal Cabinet's decision to intervene was taken only after long and anxious deliberation. At the beginning of the crisis, opinion in the country was on the whole far from bellicose, and a strong element in the Cabinet was anti-war. A few were anti-war on principle, in the sense that they believed that Britain should in no circumstances become embroiled in a Continental struggle. Some, on the other hand, were convinced that Britain could not afford to allow France to stand alone against Germany in the West. This was also the view of the Conservative opposition, including most emphatically the Conservative press.

Between the pro- and anti-war groups in the Cabinet there was an important group of doubters, in which the key figure was Lloyd George. Despite a reputation for pacifism deriving from his stand against the Boer War, and due to a misreading of his attitude at that time, Lloyd George was never, in fact, a pacifist. During the Agadir crisis of 1911,[2] he had taken a tough line against what he saw as unacceptable German pretensions. Instinctively, he sympathised with France, on grounds of cultural and democratic solidarity, and he was also inclined to support her on grounds of strategic realism. On 27 July 1914 he defended the Entente to C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, saying, "You know I am much more pro-French than you are".

Yet in the same conversation he insisted that there could be no question of Britain's "taking part in any war in the first instance". Only a fortnight before he had spoken in very bland and dove-like terms at the Mansion House, where his hawkish Agadir speech had been made three years earlier. He was reluctant to believe that the crisis over Serbia need involve Britain in war, and for several days he remained of that opinion, while not joining those of his colleagues who were out-and-out neutralists. His doubts were resolved by the German invasion of Belgium, by the spectacle of Belgian resistance, and by the evidence that the British people were profoundly stirred. Later, Frances Stevenson wrote that Lloyd George's mind was made up from the first, "that he knew we would have to go in", but that the invasion of Belgium provided "a heaven-sent excuse".[3] This may be too simple, as well as too cynical, an explanation. What is certain is that his decision to support intervention was a powerful factor in unifying the country.

Obviously British mass opinion at the time was more emotional and less complicated than his. But I would not dismiss it as "thoughtless patriotism", or even as mere patriotism, thoughtless or otherwise. There was, certainly, an underlying fear of Germany, both reflected and fostered by certain newspapers, particularly those controlled by Lord Northcliffe, and by a large literature on the subject of invasion.

The German threat to British naval supremacy had been causing apprehension at the popular level, and not without reason. Of course there was some jingoistic feeling, despite the considerable disenchantment with jingoism that had set in during the later stages of the Boer War. Yet the spirit of the British people in 1914 was not so far removed from that of Edith Cavell's famous words ("I realise that patriotism is not enough"). Most of them were, to be sure, fervently patriotic, but their patriotism did not exclude a wider and vaguer, but none the less potent, idealism. Having experienced the mood of 1939, I have little doubt that that of 1914 was nobler and more generous. (That of 1940 was very different, though still not necessarily better than the 1914 spirit, as I will try to explain in a moment.)

IN SOME WAYS the British may have been too idealistic in their attitude to World War I. That may be a more pertinent criticism than the opposite one. If they had been as down-to-earth as the French, to whom the War was essentially a struggle for survival, they might afterwards have avoided the calamitous mistakes that made a further war inevitable. When Dr Runcie said in 1988 that the 1914-18 War did not produce the religious revival that some were looking for, he was clearly right in the formal and orthodox sense. But in another sense it seems to me that the British were inspired in that war by a Christian, or at any rate a sub-Christian, mystique. The themes of blood-sacrifice and atonement were much in evidence, but with a political twist. Britain was thought to be fighting not just to preserve its own freedom and its position in the world, but to save as well the whole human race from war itself. Those who died in the conflict were, therefore, seen as sacramental victims, purging the world of one of its worst evils.

All this was a far cry from the much-reviled balance of power—for which, however, there was and is quite a lot to be said. So long as power remains the basic element in politics, both internally and internationally—and there is no immediate prospect of its ceasing to be—it is surely better for it to be balanced, since trouble tends to begin when it gets out of balance. Of course civilised people need an inspiring cause when they go to war, but they also need to keep their feet on the ground. It is dangerous for them to have a cause so exalted that they altogether lose sight of mundane realities.

If in 1914 the British erred on the side of excessive idealism, in 1939 they erred the other way. There was little of

[2] A complex diplomatic incident, in which Germany sent a gunboat to the Moroccan port of Agadir, in an attempt (among other things) to drive a wedge between Britain and France.

[3] Frances Lloyd George (formerly Stevenson), *The Years That Are Past* (1967), pp. 73-74.

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knight-errantry about the spirit in which they entered World War II. This was true, at any rate, of the British of the United Kingdom, though the people of the Dominions (as the self-governing nations of the British Commonwealth were still called) showed the same spirit that they had shown in 1914, despite their harsh experiences in World War I,[4] and despite the greater independence they had since acquired. It is worth remarking that it was only by virtue of the Dominions' participation, and of the less voluntary participation of India, that World War II could be described, at the outset, as a world war at all. But for them, it would have been an almost purely European contest until December 1941, and quite restricted even as such until Germany attacked Russia in the summer of that year. (France, of course, had overseas territories as well, but they were less important and anyway not self-governing.)

The fate of Poland in 1939 evoked, in Britain, none of the popular emotion that the fate of Belgium in 1914 had aroused. Poland was another far-off Slav country, like Czechoslovakia, which became the *casus belli* only because, when Hitler tore up the Munich agreement and occupied Prague in March 1939, even the British government of the day began to see that he was unappeasable and so gave a "guarantee" to Poland. Until then, no consideration of honour or decency had inhibited its attempts to appease him. The guarantee did not, of course, deter him in September 1939, but it did bring about a situation in which Britain most reluctantly declared war on the Third *Reich*. Nothing, however, was done to help Poland while she was being overrun. There was no diversionary attack in the West, and a period of "phoney war" ensued.

During this period British feelings were stirred by the sight of a small nation holding a mighty neighbour at bay, but the mighty neighbour was not Germany, and the small nation in question would before long be fighting on Germany's side. Sympathy with Finland was natural enough, but the British government's plan to intervene on behalf of Finland against the Soviet Union was, in the circumstances, sheer insanity (even though combined with a plan to deny Swedish iron ore to Germany, which was more relevant though scarcely more realistic). In any case, Finnish resistance ended in mid-March, and a month later "the phoney war" came to an end when Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway.

The resulting Norwegian campaign had the by no means predictable effect of bringing Winston Churchill to supreme power, and was swiftly followed by the full-scale German onslaught in the West, the Dunkirk evacuation, the fall of France, and the isolation of Britain. The mood of the country at this moment was certainly far nobler than it had been the year before. In the summer of 1940 there was a heady spirit of defiance and an exciting sense of national unity. Instead of the cowardice of the 1930s there was, at last, heroism in the air. All the same, we have to realise that 1940 was a time when some of our worst national vices became, for the moment, virtues. Our morale then was largely compounded of self-righteousness, insularity, xenophobia, and ignorance. We were sustained by the illusory belief that we had been let down by our allies and were better off without them.

In fact, it was we who had let the French down by our failure to give them the moral and political support they deserved after World War I, and by our slowness to rearm when faced with a revived Germany bent on revenge. In the Norwegian campaign we behaved outrageously to the Norwegians, as is painfully clear from François Kersaudy's account of the campaign.[5] At Dunkirk we behaved very badly to the French, and then added insult to injury by fabricating the idea that the British Expeditionary Force had escaped in spite of them, whereas in truth its escape was made possible by their dogged defence of the perimeter. Nicholas Harman describes this propagandist British version of events at Dunkirk as "the necessary myth",[6] because it contributed to British morale at a time of desperate crisis. But a myth it certainly was.

As for being better off without allies, this was pure self-delusion. Strictly, the United Kingdom was not alone in 1940, because the Dominions continued to give vital support, and because President Roosevelt decided that it was in America's interest to back British resistance by all means short of war. Even so, there was no way that Britain could have defeated Germany if Hitler had not obligingly defeated himself by a succession of mistakes: above all, by declaring war on the United States four days after Pearl Harbor.

Francis Williams's projection of Britain's mood in 1940, though woven into the subsequent mythology, is in fact wildly misleading. The suggestion that Britain's resolve to fight on was inspired by a crusading vision of democratic revolution throughout Europe is the stuff of fantasy. The Left-wing idealism expressed by Williams doubtless found some popular echo in relation to British domestic politics, where opinion was turning drastically against the Conservatives and the Labour landslide of 1945 was already in the making. But in so far as it related to foreigners, the idealism was not widely shared. This has to be stressed, because the presumption that Britain's role in World War II was morally superior owes much to the moral inferiority of the enemy. Beyond question, Hitler's régime was far worse than the Kaiser's; as Dr Runcie said in his lecture, "A war which closed down Belsen and Buchenwald was worth fighting".

Indeed it was—but surely that is rather beside the point.

[4] In the first War no episode, of course, is more symbolic of the contribution from overseas than the Gallipoli campaign, in which (it has been rightly said) Australia and New Zealand came of age as nations. Yet, while always remembering and honouring Anzac prowess at Gallipoli, we should not forget that a large number of men from the United Kingdom also served there, as well as a substantial French force. Australian and New Zealand troops later fought with equal valour on the Western Front and, like the Canadians, were particularly prominent in the final stages. The title of one of the most vivid of all first-hand accounts of that War, Alexander Aitken's *Gallipoli to the Somme: Recollections of a New Zealand Infantryman* (1963), is enough to show that Gallipoli was only one of the battlegrounds on which Anzac forces won renown between 1915 and 1918, though it will always be the most distinctive.

[5] François Kersaudy, *1940: La Guerre du Fer* (1987). The English translation—*Norway 1940*—was published by Collins in January at £15.00.

[6] Nicholas Harman, *Dunkirk: The Necessary Myth* (1980).

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Britain did not go to war with Hitler because he was a horrible racist tyrant, or maintain the struggle against him in order to bring salvation to Continental Europe. In World War II, as in World War I, Germany was challenged not because its régime was odious internally, but because it was a menace externally. In so far as the instinct of self-preservation was tinged with idealism, it was, I suggest, noticeably more so in the first War than in the second, though the degree of evil against which we were fighting was in reverse proportion.

In comparing the motivation for British involvement in the two World Wars, I have strayed some distance into World War II, because it seems only fair to bring the spirit of 1940, as well as that of 1939, into the reckoning. Either way, I do not think the spirit of 1914 suffers from the comparison. Now let me turn to the way the two Wars were actually fought by Britain, saying no more about the period between September 1939 and the summer of 1940—concerning which the less said the better.

One most significant difference is that in World War I recruitment for the British armed forces was voluntary for the first year, and to some extent voluntary until mid-1916, whereas in the next War there was outright conscription from the start. One should not be too starry-eyed about the early part of World War I. Patriotism and a spontaneous eagerness to serve were certainly prevalent, but not universal. Within the voluntary system there was no lack of moral blackmail; and among those who did not volunteer for the forces, enthusiasm for the War was not always manifest.

I was struck, for instance, by an incident recorded in a new book of World War I letters—*My Own Darling: Letters from Montie to Kitty Carlisle* (edited and published by their son, Christopher Carlisle). In July 1915 Montie sails in the *Aquitania* from Liverpool to Lemnos, with the 8th Northumberland Fusiliers, to take part in the Gallipoli campaign; and on 6 July he writes to his wife: "Fancy, 80 of the stokers deserted before we sailed and a guard with fixed bayonets had to be placed on the remainder." One looks in vain for any reference to this incident in the official histories. Neither Sir Archibald Hurd nor Sir Julian Corbett mentions it,[7] and who knows how many other such incidents have gone unrecorded?

Yet, when every cautionary discount has been made, it remains true that the early part of World War I was different in kind from the rest of that War, and from the whole of World War II, because until 1916 the British were participating essentially as volunteers. In his marvellous history of Britain in World War I, *The Myriad Faces of War* (1986), Trevor Wilson writes:

> "Nothing revealed the British people's commitment to this war better than the way in which so many of the country's young men volunteered for military service. There was no inevitability about this. It is quite possible for people to proclaim the justice of their country's involvement in a war and yet not intend themselves to participate, either by risking their lives or by paying higher taxes. From the first day Britain's endorsement of the war was not of this order. Doubtless scarcely any of those who rushed to the recruiting stations divined what sort of a conflict they were in for. This is no reason for presuming that, had they known, they would have held back."

Of course there was some change of mood in the last two years of the War, when military service was no longer voluntary, and when the initial optimism had been tempered by the mounting toll of casualties, with so little—until the last few months—to show for all the effort and suffering. But just as one should not exaggerate the rapture of the early years, so one should not exaggerate the gloom and disillusion that followed. Throughout the War, and to the very end, the morale of British troops was remarkably high. Wilfred Owen, the most eloquent voice of the later period, carried on fighting despite his pacifism, and did not entirely lose what Julian Grenfell, in the early period, had called "joy of battle". Moreover, there was a nobility in Owen's disgust which was, perhaps, characteristic of World War I, and somehow rather missing from World War II.

Much of the odium directed against World War I is concentrated upon the generals—particularly Haig—and upon the apparently unjustifiable human cost of their offensives. In Haig's case, it is indeed hard to justify the prolongation of the Somme fighting beyond mid-September 1916, or that of Third Ypres through October and into November 1917. Yet it should always be borne in mind, when judging the actions of those who held responsibility in World War I, whether soldiers or civilians, that they were engaged in warfare on a scale, and of a character, never previously known, and wrestling with problems for which there were absolutely no precedents. Their successors in World War II had their example to learn from.

It should also not be forgotten that World War I ended in a comprehensive military victory for the Entente Powers, to which the British Army made a decisive contribution. Moreover, the Central Powers were defeated in four-and-a-quarter years, despite the virtual elimination of Russia as an effective ally after the Brusilov offensive in 1916, and despite the late and limited participation of the United States.

A young artillery officer, later an outstanding figure in the academic world, may be quoted as a witness of the final stages of the War on the Western Front. In his *Memories*, Maurice Bowra describes the battle on 8 August 1918 when the Canadians and Anzacs, for whom his battery was providing a moving barrage, attacked the German line near Villers Bretonneux:

> "This was one of the few days in my military life when I felt the terrifying fascination of battle. The sinister silence before zero-hour, the sudden, simultaneous, deafening start of the barrage, the emergence of the tanks and their accompanying infantry, the struggle, always successful, to take well-held positions, the decisive advance forward, all contributed to a wild exhilaration in which we conducted our duties with fits of laughter and uproarious jokes."

No sign there of any war-weariness or cynicism.

[7] In Hurd's history of *The Merchant Navy* in the Great War (3 vols, 1921-28) or in Corbett's *Naval Operations* (1921-23).

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When we turn to Britain's martial performance in World War II, there can be no doubt that the great and good period was from June 1940 to February 1941—the period of the Battle of Britain and overwhelming victories over the Italians in North and East Africa. Of these exploits the Battle of Britain was, of course, by far the most important, because it was a trial of strength with the main enemy, Germany, and because it averted the threat of an invasion which, if successful, would have resulted in Britain's total defeat and conquest. The air victory, or draw in Britain's favour, over south-east England in the summer and early autumn of 1940 was itself made possible by a temporary victory within the RAF before the War, of the advocates of fighters over the bomber-orientated orthodoxy deriving from Lord Trenchard, which in the nick of time enabled the fighters that saved the country to be produced. It must also be said that Hitler threw away his chance of achieving control of the sky over Britain in 1940, when he switched his bombers from their deadly and potentially decisive attacks on airfields to indiscriminate raids on London and other cities. From this fatal mistake the authors of later British air strategy failed to draw the appropriate lesson.

If the Battle of Britain had been lost, it is hard to imagine how the country could have been saved. No doubt the invaders would have suffered heavy losses in the Channel, but so would the Royal Navy, without air cover. In all probability a sufficient number of Germans would have got ashore, with tanks and guns, and what would there then have been to stop them? The British Expeditionary Force had escaped from France, but leaving most of its equipment behind. The Home Guard—"Dad's Army"—was good for national morale and social cohesion, but hardly for resisting the *Wehrmacht*.

March 1941 until November 1942 was a time of almost unrelieved disaster for British arms, in mainland Greece, Crete, the Western Desert, and the Far East. But it was, nevertheless, a time when the War was transformed by the enforced involvement of the Soviet Union and the United States, and when the tide of war turned, thanks very largely to the efforts of these two new allies. The turning-point in the West was the Russian stand at Stalingrad, and the cutting-off of a German army there. The turning-point in the Pacific was marked by the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, in which the US aircraft-carriers, providentially absent from Pearl Harbor when it was attacked, more than held their own against the Japanese.

If there had been no British victory by the end of 1942, Churchill's continued leadership would have been in serious doubt, despite the prestige he had justly earned in 1940. But after a fortnight of hard pounding at El Alamein, General Montgomery defeated Rommel by sheer weight of manpower and *matériel*. (The Eighth Army's numerical preponderance over Rommel's mixed force of Germans and Italians, and its superiority in equipment and air support, were quite overwhelming.) Alamein was swiftly followed by the Anglo-American landings on the African shore at the other end of the Mediterranean, which in turn led, in 1943, to the invasions of Sicily and mainland Italy. In these operations, and for the rest of the War in the West, the Americans were predominant partners.

They did not, however, get their way with the British about the date for landing in north-west Europe. Like the Russians, the Americans did not regard Italy as a proper Second Front, and surely they were right. Italy was a secondary front, where moreover the Germans had the advantage of much shorter communications and a terrain that favoured defence. Fewer Germans were deployed there in combat than were present in the Balkans merely as a precaution against Allied landings—which suggests that the net diversion of German troops from the Eastern Front, as a result of the Allied campaign in Italy, may have been almost negligible. Yet such was the reluctance of the British to undertake a cross-Channel invasion it was delayed until the summer of 1944. Apart, therefore, from the brief campaign in 1940, it was only for the last year of the War that the British Army was engaged with the main enemy on a main front.

This has to be remembered when the British casualty figures for the two World Wars are invidiously contrasted. It is indeed true that in World War I the total British figure of war dead was about a million, whereas in World War II the comparable figure was between a third and half of that number. But this disparity is hardly surprising in view of the British Army's much heavier involvement in World War I. Another consideration, often overlooked, is that advances in medicine between the two Wars enabled many wounded men who would have died in the first to survive in the second. Nevertheless, the scale of losses in battle was not always or necessarily lower in the later War. According to one estimate, at Alamein "the proportion of casualties among men actually engaged was as heavy as on the Somme". But Alamein was not only a much smaller battle; it also lasted a much shorter time. The relative economy of British soldiers' lives that was undeniably achieved in World War II was achieved, above all, by economy of fighting.

It is often said that Churchill, remembering the carnage of Gallipoli, the Somme, and other World War I battles, was determined at all costs to avoid any repetition of it. This is not the whole truth, nor even the larger part of the truth. In some ways there was indeed more humanity in World War II than in World War I: for instance, in the attitude to conscientious objectors, and in the treatment of those who broke down under the stress of battle. Moreover, Churchill certainly did want to avoid the squandering of British lives: so did Montgomery and other commanders with unpleasant memories of the Western Front. Yet this was not the principal reason—at any rate so far as Churchill was concerned—for hesitation about sending British troops across the Channel to grapple with the main German forces. The principal reason, sad to say, was that he had lost confidence in the fighting spirit of the British Army.

In February 1942, when the Japanese were poised to attack Singapore, Churchill ordered the local commander, General Arthur Percival, to turn the city into a citadel and fight "to the death", since Britain's "whole fighting reputation" and "the honour of the British Empire" were at stake. Nevertheless, Percival and the garrison of 100,000 surrendered in a week. Four months later, in Cyrenaica, 35,000

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men surrendered at Tobruk after only 24 hours, whereas at about the same time a much smaller force of Fighting French held out for ten days at Bir Hacheim—an exploit that won Rommel's warm admiration. Faced with Singapore and Tobruk, Churchill was plunged in gloom. "I cannot get over Singapore", he told his doctor, Lord Moran. On another occasion, also to Moran, he said: "I am ashamed. I cannot understand why Tobruk gave in. More than 30,000 of our men put up their hands. If they won't fight. . . ." He did not complete the sentence, but our imaginations can do so for him.

In his deep anxiety about how British troops would perform against an insufficiently weakened *Wehrmacht*, he was susceptible to the siren voice of one who believed that the War could be won without a major struggle on land. Sir Charles Portal, Chief of Air Staff, had been Trenchard's favourite disciple and, like his master, was convinced of the war-winning capacity of bombing. He was the most dangerous sort of fanatic—the sort that appears reasonable. Portal managed to escape the odium in which "Bomber" Harris was later held, because his manner was more artful and less abrasive. Yet Harris was his creature, appointed by him to carry out his policy. The policy was, quite simply, to defeat Germany by the terror-bombing of German cities.

Churchill at first reacted to the idea with repugnance and scepticism. He did not at all like the thought of murdering women and children, and was doubtful that it would work. But gradually Portal wore him down, and at length he agreed to a course of action which gravely blemished his own and the country's good name, without succeeding in its purpose. In February 1942 a directive was sent to Bomber Command that bombing should in future be focused "on the morale of the enemy civil population", and in May the first 1,000-bomber raid was carried out, against Cologne. Terror-bombing remained the explicit prime activity of the RAF until 1944 when, with difficulty, a new priority was asserted: that of attacking road and rail communications in northern France in preparation for D-Day. During the long period of indiscriminate bombing, hundreds of thousands of Germans were killed and many more mutilated, while whole cities were laid waste. Yet war production, skilfully redeployed, continued at a high level; and, above all, the morale of the people was not broken.

Nearly three centuries earlier Oliver Cromwell had set out to subdue Ireland by the wholesale massacre of civilians—a policy regarded as brutal even by the standards of his time. But at least it worked. The same policy revived by a British government in a supposedly more civilised age, and on a much larger scale, did not even have that justification.

Whatever the horrors of World War I, it was a conflict between fighting men. In World War II, for two years the British war machine was principally directed not against the armed forces of the enemy, but against unarmed civilians. Which was the nobler method of conducting a war? The question hardly needs to be asked.

Furthermore, a policy intended to spare British lives was in fact, extremely wasteful of the lives of British airmen, who experienced quite as much fear as they inflicted, and who suffered very heavy losses. They should not be blamed for the beastly and dangerous work they were ordered to do. John Terraine makes an interesting comment on RAF casualties, particularly among bomber aircrew, in his history of the RAF in Europe during World War II:

> "The aircrew total, 55,573, has a special significance; in the First World War the officer losses of the British Empire included 38,834 killed, and this slaughter of the nation's *élite* was widely regarded as the most tragic and damaging aspect of that war. It was to avoid such a thing ever happening again that Britain turned her back on a Continental policy, and looked to the Air Force rather than the Army for salvation. Yet . . . by and large RAF aircrew were exactly the same type of men as the officers of 1914-18; it is salutary to see how the pursuit of a 'cheaper' policy brought in its train only a much higher cost."[8]

One statistic given by Terraine underlines the importance of defining "British" in a broad, Commonwealth, sense when considering both World Wars, and more especially the composition of the RAF in the second. Of RAF pilots in that War, 46% came from the so-called white Dominions. Yet the combined populations of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and (white) South Africa amounted, at the time, to less than half that of the United Kingdom. Clearly, the Dominions' contribution to what Terraine sees as Britain's fighting *élite* in World War II was out of all proportion to their numbers.

In fairness to the Royal Navy, it should be said that its performance in World War II was certainly no less admirable than in World War I, and very arguably more so. The morale of the relatively small number of naval personnel was never in doubt; and the Navy did not suffer, like the RAF's Bomber Command, from being given discreditable work to do.

FINALLY, WHAT OF the outcome of the two Wars? In the first, Britain's immediate *casus belli* was Belgium, and at the end of the War Belgium's freedom was fully restored. The same could hardly be said of Poland's in 1945. Poland and the whole of Eastern Europe paid the price of the Anglo-American delay in invading the Continent from the west, which was due, as we have seen, to British reluctance. In 1918 Britain emerged from the War not only independent and secure, but still a superpower. In 1945 she was independent, at any rate politically, and to that extent victorious; but in other respects she was a net loser, while superpower status was passing, as Alexis de Tocqueville long ago predicted, to Russia and America.

World War I became, in a sense, more of a democratic crusade as time went on, mainly because Czarist Russia fell out and the United States came in. The democratic doctrine of self-determination was the ideology of the victorious allies in 1918, though of course their degree of commitment to it, and the ways they chose to interpret it, varied. The credentials of World War II as a democratic crusade were fatally flawed from the moment Stalin's Russia became a belli-

[8] John Terraine, *The Right of the Line: The Royal Air Force in the European War, 1939-45* (1985).

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gerent; and at the end of the War half of Europe merely exchanged one form of totalitarian dictatorship for another.

It might be thought that post-1945 would at least compare favourably with post-1918 in respect of the treatment of Germany. But does it, really? The "war guilt" clause of the Versailles Treaty, assigning guilt for the war to the entire German nation, was certainly an injustice and an absurdity. It was altogether better to confine guilt to the nation's leaders, more especially when they were Nazis, though the Nuremberg trials were hardly models of justice, granted Soviet representation on the tribunal. The economic provisions of Versailles were unrealistic rather than unjust. Maynard Keynes's attack on them went much too far, challenging the whole moral basis of the Treaty. In particular, he showed no understanding of France's need for reparations and security. His celebrated tract, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), was tendentious in argument and mischievous in effect. Nevertheless, it is true that Germany's economic treatment by the West was more enlightened after World War II.

Politically, the difference is very much the other way. After World War I, the principle of self-determination was scrupulously applied to the defeated enemy. Germany's territory was left virtually intact; apart from Alsace-Lorraine, Western Poland, Danzig, and (temporarily) the Saar, she remained the united nation that Bismarck had forged. In 1945 she was partitioned, and also lost nearly a quarter of her pre-1938 territory, including East Prussia. The severity of Germany's political treatment after 1945 was, of course, due largely to the Russians, who in 1918 had themselves been the victims of a Carthaginian peace at Germany's hands. But the British have a substantial share of responsibility, through their opposition to a Second Front in 1943.

As for the greater durability of peace after World War II, this resulted from two factors for which Britain can claim no specific credit: the end of American isolationism, and the Cold War. Hot war was avoided, not because the democratic revolution that Francis Williams looked for occurred in 1945, but because—quite contrary to his desire—a balance of power was established.

Did World War II promote a social revolution inside Britain? The victory of the Labour Party in 1945 was seen by many at the time as a revolutionary event, but hardly seems so in retrospect. One reason for it may have been that voters wanted to show their displeasure with the party which had been dominant throughout the inter-War period and had got the country into another major war. A similar revulsion may help to explain the Conservative landslide in 1918 (for that was what the Coalition victory really was). The truth, surely, is that both World Wars accelerated social change, but that neither caused a social revolution. The 1945 Labour Government disappointed fewer hopes than the Lloyd George Coalition, mainly because it was homogeneously committed to reform. Yet it is probably fair to say that the emancipation of women which resulted from World War I was more nearly revolutionary than any social change attributable to World War II.

After the first War there was nobility in the British arrangements to commemorate the dead. The Imperial War Graves Commission did its work with sensitivity and imagination. (Much of the imagination was supplied by Rudyard Kipling, who among other things devised the beautiful epitaph for the unidentifiable: "A Soldier of the Great War, Known unto God"—his own son having disappeared without trace at the battle of Loos.) "The Unknown Warrior" was another imaginative concept; a hero suitable for the age of the common man. And the Armistice Day cult—though in Britain between the Wars it took the form, regrettably, of celebrating a once-for-all sacrifice, rather than of reminding people of the permanent need for sacrifice to avert danger—had nevertheless a beauty and dignity all its own.

After 1945 the process of commemoration was in no way refined or improved. On the contrary, a bad decision was taken to transfer the Day of Remembrance from 11 November to the nearest Sunday to that date. The whole point of the two minutes' silence was that it normally interrupted the ordinary business of life on a weekday, so achieving a profoundly dramatic effect. To have it at 11 a.m. on a Sunday was to lose the effect and miss the point.

In conclusion, I must return to the contrast so persistently drawn between the two Wars: that the second, unlike the first, was a genuine expression of popular feeling, and (as one might put it) of Rousseau's "general will". A. J. P. Taylor writes of World War II in his volume in the *Oxford History of England*: "This was a people's war. . . . They themselves wanted to win." The clear implication is that in World War I the people were not similarly involved. Even if this were true, it would not necessarily mean that World War II was nobler than its predecessor. In 1901 Winston Churchill said with baleful prescience: "Democracy is more vindictive than cabinets. The wars of peoples will be more terrible than the wars of kings."

But in fact it is not true. Though Britain certainly had a more democratic franchise in 1939 than in 1914, the decision to go to war was no more democratic on the later occasion than on the earlier. The people had nothing whatever to do with the guarantee to Poland which provided the *casus belli*, and even Parliament, which was incidentally nearing the end of its statutory term, did no more than ratify a decision already taken by the Government.

The British people were no less committed to World War I than to World War II; in some ways, as I have tried to indicate, they were more so. Moreover, they felt the impact of war no less deeply. Even among the civilian population of the United Kingdom—which in one sense, admittedly, had a more direct involvement in World War II, through exposure to bombing on a larger scale—the toll of death and suffering caused by the Blitz is more than balanced by the heavier toll of bereavement afflicting the home front in World War I.

All in all, it would seem that the motivation, conduct and achievement of Britain—whether as a government or as a people—were nobler in World War I than in World War II, and that the conventional wisdom favouring the opposite view cries out to be re-examined. It is not only grossly unfair to the past, but also unhealthy for the present and misleading for the future.

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Paul Groves

The Interview Room

What I remember most is not the inquisitors, but waiting.
It took hours, once short-listed, to be scrutinised until
all doubt fell away, and the winner emerged. Four of us,
tailors' dummies, slogged it out beforehand, united
by the occasion, divided by ambition: the Scunthorpe girl
who'd nearly become a nun, the Cheam lad orphaned at ten
(he got my sympathy vote), the mother of two with boundless energy.
They met me, the thirty-year-old too assured by half
or so it seemed. The secretary appeared. Another rose
and disappeared, straightening two-piece, adjusting tie,
eventually to reappear flushed, relieved, uncertain.
"What were they like?" "Not so bad. They put you at your ease."
Finally it was my turn. The secretary closed the door
behind me. The victim's chair stood centre-stage, surrounded by
acres of carpet. The chairman spoke. I was sure his suit
was Savile Row. Jowls and beak quivered; his turkey eyes
were red and quizzical; gibberish washed over me in the form
of a question. The eagle to his left looked eminent and ancient;
broad shoulders hunched over the large table; a heavy bill
nodded slightly in the direction of sleep. To his right an ostrich sat,
imperiously aloof, spectacles perched on a broad face.
I could tell she didn't like me. Her interjections became
increasingly hostile. After what seemed hours the secretary
led me out. The others were still there, huddled in the anteroom
awaiting verdicts. I cleared my throat; muttered "Cinch".

Ménage à Trois

The water mill is beating through the night,
A paddle steamer going nowhere but
Through time. It marks the seconds like a heart.

Its rhythm is hypnotic. Each room sleeps.
Meanwhile this massive urgent presence keeps
Dicing up the silence into heaps.

Where have we gone wrong? Against his arm
Your delicate head rests, while you are warm
Against my naked flank—or do I dream?

Perhaps tomorrow I will wake to see
True emptiness, with neither beside me,
Just one lame note. *We thought it best. Sorry.*

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The ancient timbers creak. We're all at sea
Or shipwrecked on a reef. We clingingly
Suppose that we are liberated, free.

Louder and yet louder bangs the wheel!
I know exactly how its huge beams feel.
Is anything, is anything for real?

The sun will banish doubt. He'll read the paper
While eating toast. You'll blithely fix your hair.
I'll romp with Towser on the flagstone floor

The wheel will know that nothing is resolved.
You need a child. The issue is not shelved
Indefinitely, only quartered, halved,

Manipulated by the beating blades.
My fears are gyring, terrible black birds
That swoop upon the mingling of bloods.

After Matins

He sees her at the organ, meekly playing.
The saints in all the windows hold their breath.
He tries to concentrate while he is praying:
He owes it to the worshippers. However
Thoughts stray beyond conformity and death
And eulogising dulcetly forever

Behind the shining gates of the hereafter.
He looks at her smooth head, her lovely shoulders.
No matter that he hears the Devil's laughter,
He cannot rid her from his thoughts. She stands
After the service. The small brilliant boulders
Of her breasts are where he'd place his hands

If only opportunity allowed.
She never married, and he loves his wife,
But something in this splendid creature (proud
Bearing, gentle eyes) rips him to tatters.
He wrestles with his problem: lust or love?
He cannot put his mind to other matters.

Beside her in the vestry, quite alone,
He states, "I have an awful longing for
Something beyond my reach." She says, "Go on."
He frowns and says, "No matter. Well—must dash."
He exits, and she locks the massive door,
Hiding the key like so much petty cash.

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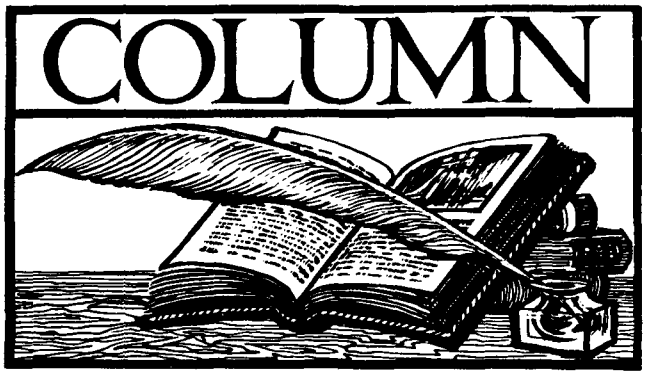

HIDEOUS RUMOUR has it that a US translator well-known for his mellifluous errors has been commissioned to produce an American-language version of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Malicious sub-rumour adds that his first draft for its opening sentence—"*Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure*"—ran: "Time was, I'd slip into the sack at an early hour."

I don't believe a word of it. Why bother? Like all recipients of the Scott Moncrieff Prize, I'm uneasily aware that C. K. Scott Moncrieff's Proust was a brilliant approximation, a dazzling paste jewel: but Terence Kilmartin's corrections have removed the flaws without diminishing the lustre. In various French and English editions, Proust already takes up yards of shelf-space. Why sacrifice more for, say, *Trackin' Down Bygone Days*?

Translators and translation, of course, have always had a bad press. "*Traduttore, traditore*" said the Italian proverb; "Translation is at best an echo", declared George Borrow. James Howell put it into verse:

> *Some hold translations not unlike to be*
> *The wrong side of a Turkish tapestry.*

"*Les traductions sont commes les femmes*", claimed some male chauvinist Frenchman. "*Quand elles sont belles, elles ne sont pas fidèles; quand elles sont fidèles, elles ne sont pas belles.*" Roy Campbell pinched the thought—into fewer words. "Translations (like wives)", he told the *Poetry Review* in 1949, "are seldom faithful if they are in the least attractive."

I don't believe a word of that either. Not because I'm bidding for the feminist vote—though I might be; not because I think beauty and fidelity always go together—though they often do. What seems debatable—in translations—is the central concept of "fidelity". It somehow suggests Fido, the faithful pet dog snuffling along at its owner's heels. My notion of the translator's role is rather different.

Appearances notwithstanding, I say this not as a professional translator. Once, it's true, I had to produce an English version of some Suez Canal rules: but that was in the Army in Egypt and because someone had seen *Madame Bovary* in my tent. . . . Otherwise, I've only twice translated books, and then at the request of the authors. Each time, my respect for real translators has grown.

In some respects, translating is an easy job. You can pick up your task and put it down like sewing or knitting, doing the odd spell now and then in small corners of the day. The overall design of the work is fixed for you, as in painting by numbers, so your nights are not haunted by worries about the next chapter, or how to get the hero out of his current scrape. At worst, you may want to transpose sentences into what, in the second language, seems a more logical order.

But none of this means that translators have a carefree life. They're badly paid, to start with; and George Orwell's remark that writing a book is like having a long illness applies to translating one too. I've just emerged from a 250,000-word labour of love for a French friend, an Emeritus Professor at the Sorbonne, who's produced *A European History of Europe*, to be published simultaneously in various languages; and at this point I confess that I'd welcome a spell of convalescence.[1]

It's not just the sheer bulk of the book, although that at first was daunting: 800 pages of typescript in a yellow, French Post Office box about as heavy as an old-fashioned typewriter. It's weighed on my time and conscience as well as on my worktop: letters, editorial duties, social life and even filing have just had to wait. And, of course, it's ruined my typing. "Always hammer, hammer, hammer! Eh! Mr Gibbon?" Right on, Your Grace: right on to the end.

In one respect, the book's length is actually an advantage. It gives one practice in what to me is an unnatural art. This last, in fact, is the really tiring aspect of the job.

Primarily, like many people, I seem to think in pictures. I've never understood purists like the 17th-century Cambridge Platonists, who claimed to think in ideas. The nearest I can come to that is thinking in words; and then it's in either French or English—not both at once. Making links between the two languages is awkward: the normal link in each case is not to the other language, but to an image or sensation, most often the picture of an action or a thing. Translating, in these circumstances, ceases to be sewing, knitting, or painting by numbers: it feels much more like performing in a circus, riding two horses with a foot on the saddle of each.

Some translators, I suspect, do this habitually. Their minds must work like dictionaries. Say "*roi*" to them, and they think "king"—or vice versa. *Moi pas*. Say either word to me, and I see a slightly ridiculous child's-encyclopaedia drawing of an upright chap wearing a crown.

This makes translation a bit laborious—always going through an intermediary, as in interpreters' booths where, for want of someone with both Greek and Danish, the interpretation between them has to go via English or French. Clearly, I'd make a bad simultaneous interpreter. Even in conversation, if I use some phrase from the other language, I tend to go on talking in it, like a train that's switched tracks at the points. "Bilingual, pay later" you might say.

STILL, THE WORD-IMAGE-WORD translating procedure has its advantages. The aim of a translation, presumably, is to make on its reader as much as possible the same impression as was made on readers of the original. "As much as possible" is a key proviso. No one brings an unfurnished mind to any piece of reading. A whole *Weltanschauung* hangs in the

[1] Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's *A European History of Europe* is due to be published in Britain by Viking.

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background like heavy tapestry; there are preconceived ideas to bark your shins against, well-polished habits to slip on, even an *oubliette*. "The French", to a British reader, often carries an overtone of both sneaking admiration and wary mistrust. To a French reader, "*les Français*" may convey the idea of a generally honest lot, full of native ability, but rather put upon by others, and (although "individualists") strongly aware of their collective identity. "Nation", to many British people, means much the same as "state" or "country". To the French, it has the very precise connotation of "the people, organised", in contradistinction to "the state". Or try translating "*patrie*". Etymologically, "Fatherland": but that, to the British, suggests "*Vaterland*" and goose-stepping troops. "Motherland" sounds made-up, and "mother country" sounds cosy, like "mother hen". "*Patrie*", by contrast, has an heroic ring to it, partly because of the *Marseillaise*.

So translation will always to some extent traduce. But at least the word-image-word method makes one alert to the danger. Instead of asking silently "What's the term for "*politique conjoncturelle*"—a tough one, given up by the English translators of the EEC Treaty, who settled for "conjunctural policy"—one's forced to ask, "How can I convey that idea to an English speaking reader in words that won't sound foreign?"

This is especially difficult with some French expressions which to British or Americans may seem abstract and colourless. Take "*l'esprit de domination*". "Spirit of domination" *sounds* like a translated phrase, clumsy and unvivid. "Domineering" gets closer: but that is a gerund, not a neat noun, and it refers to an activity rather than a state of mind. "Domineeringness" is not a word. So we work our way round to "domineering attitude": but an attitude is static, the way someone stands: it's not an element running through the personality like an inflammable liquid. "*Esprit*" has something perky about it, which lifts the word "*domination*" out of its dullness. Maybe "bullying" might enliven the English: but that too is an activity, and it conjures up playground rough-and-toughs rather than ruthless nation-states. Anyway, is the British distaste for the "abstract and colourless" something the translator should connive at? The French have no objection to the seemingly abstract (seemingly to the British, because based on Latin roots); and one eminent Frenchman I used to write for actually disliked "colour"—imagery and metaphor—because, he said, it distorted thought.

It's a constant temptation, in fact, to make the English version of a text secretly racier than the French—using short, Anglo-Saxon-based words which in British ears sound "blunt" and "vivid", but which to some Frenchmen would seem "*brutal*". Hilaire Belloc, that imperfect Francophone, embraced the temptation rather than succumbing to it: but then he was writing his own books. The translator must be more respectful, if not fully "faithful": he treads a narrow Striding Edge from author to reader, with a precipice on either side. In a traditional cartoon, one would be labelled "Bathos", the other "Pomposity".

Which is not to say that a translator must trudge. Liberties are permitted to those with agility and a head for heights. Often, a French writer will analyse an idea into its component parts, with an abstract noun for each. In the original, the result had dialectical elegance and precision—a fine feat of dissection on a microscope's slide. In English, it looks ridiculously wordy—an ancient rickety telescope wobbling when pulled out to its full length. Here, I think, the translator has a right to snap it shut.

AT TIMES, on the other hand, French has a concision which the British might envy. My favourite example is the word "*dès*". The dictionary will tell you that it means "Since, from, as early as, as long ago as (a certain time)". Well, yes: but if I write "*Dès 1789, la France a connu une certaine Révolution*", I mean more than "From 1789 onwards", but less than "As early as 1789" (with raised eyebrows and a would-you-believe-it? tone of voice). It's a lively little word, "*dès*". But then the French should envy the British that other nearly untranslatable time-word, "by". "All books must be returned to the Library by Friday." Simple, eh? But try translating that into French. "*Avant le vendredi*"? No: that would mean "by" Thursday night. "*Le vendredi*"? No again: that would mean *only* on Friday. The only way is to spell it out: "*Avant la fin de la journée de vendredi.*" Thirty-one letters in place of two—and even then we miss the faint imprecision of the English, which might just mean "before Friday" if the librarian wanted to be nasty.

Imprecision is one of the hardest things for translators to handle, especially in diplomatic texts. There, language is often deliberately used to obscure, not communicate—or, perhaps more commonly, to communicate obscurity. Both French and English have useful weasel words (try translating that). The most absurd is "certain", as in "a certain number" or "*un certain nombre*". This, of course, means exactly the opposite of what it so crisply appears to say. "*En principe*"—not quite the same as "in principle"—some cynics would privately render as "not". The best example of such guff that I know is Italian, not French. In a history of the *Partito Popolare*, forerunner of Christian Democracy, the author solemnly wrote the following sentence: "*Questo programma è stato realizzato, almeno in teoria.*" "This programme was carried out, at least in theory." An honest translation might have been: "Nothing was done."

Here, however, we may be treading on socio-cultural differences. Chinese, it seems, has no words for "yes" and "no". As a Chinese writer has recently pointed out, this doesn't mean that Chinese speakers habitually equivocate: they know perfectly well how to say "I agree", "That's right", or "I disagree", "You can't", and so on. But there is, or used to be, a convention in China that when offered something it would be impolite to accept the first time. So, analogously, it does strike some French people as crude when British or Americans speak with what they would regard as refreshing frankness. There's that delicate French word "*inexact*". Originally, as old dictionaries will still maintain, it meant what it said—"imprecise" or, of an habitual latecomer, "unpunctual" or "slack". But it soon acquired the overtone "inaccurate"; and from there it broadened out to mean, normally, "untrue". How then to translate it? "Un-

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true" is still a touch accusatory; but "inaccurate" is too—well, technical. "Not so" might work in some contexts, but it sounds too modern and still rather disputatious. There's no precise equivalent for the air of polite correction, sticking to accuracy, but not personally accusing, that's still conveyed by "*inexact*". What its user is doing is not so much contradicting, as "constating".

Come again? Oh, sorry. That's another word where the dictionary won't help you much. "*Constater*" literally means "To establish, verify, ascertain, note": it used to have mainly administrative overtones, as in certifying a death. But like many administrative terms, it's long since leaked into ordinary usage—often with a nuance not unlike that of "*inexact*". "*Je ne vous blâme pas du tout: je constate simplement. . . .*" "I don't blame you at all: I'm simply pointing out. . . ." The apparent formality helps to lessen any offence.

Formality, finally, is a further pitfall for the British or American translator. It's probably worst in German, where "*Frau Doktor Doktor*" has to be given her dues without sounding like a Teutonic Margaret Dumont in a Marx Brothers movie. "Engineer So-and-so" can be tricky in a translation from the Italian. But one of the problems that has dogged me throughout the months that I've been Englishing my French Professor friend is finding first names. In British or American usage, especially in journalism, it's rare to refer to anyone simply as "Dupont" or even "Mr" or "General" Dupont. The surname alone sounds either old-fashioned, as between Edwardian bachelors, or formal, as at school. Only great writers, composers, artists, philosophers, and a few statesmen habitually get the surname-only treatment. But in France it's still quite common form. You think translating's a sedentary occupation? You should see me dashing upstairs to the "History" section of the library, perched on steps or chairs or even the edges of bookshelves, hunting through indexes and references to find those elusive first names. It reminds me of the days when French secretaries used to call me "Monsieur", before I could coax them into Anglo-American informality. Maybe, after all, we *do* need an American version of (Marcel) Proust. "Way back, I'd gotten the habit of promptly hitting the hay. . . ."

M

An Autumn Love

There was an insistence all
that summer: on depths and shades in words which came as casual,
but which concealed beneath
the fear of being silent, yet of finding deeper truth.
Choosing things together we would squabble:
from cheese to your new look it was the uneventful
which drew our energies from, then made
demands on, then dominated the time we could
have used for talking. Our activity
increased, and with passing moment passed further opportunity
for honesty to surface.
Then, like breathing at a deathbed, it simply ceased.
All we could find to say concerned
the weather and how it looked to worsen—
things too small to mention.
The lies lay dormant, thickened.

The hours that pass are arid now and are broken
no more by truth than by unspoken
reluctance to commit to unknown
phrases words we cannot mean.
For we have reached the autumn of our love, and can observe
the changing seasons and districts only inside ourselves.
Our days find things to do, not with speech or noise
but with messages and images that voice
our loneliness far better
than we ever could, even in youth. The clutter
of life leaves us, also; and, strangely, time.
Some images have hope in them:
An old man pushing a pram.
Quietly, we are merging into them,
and become untouchable, like the mist.
As each day is shorter than the last.

Anthony Wilson

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NOTES & TOPICS

General Skoblin, Again

New Light on a Murky Affair

By Walter Laqueur

WRITING ON the strange lives of Nikolai Skoblin (ENCOUNTER, March 1989), I concluded that it was too early to give up hope that one day the truth about this mysterious affair would be known. I am glad to report progress since these lines were written. To summarise once again: General Skoblin was one of the leaders of the military organisation of the White Russian emigration in Paris in the 1930s, husband of one of the most famous Russian singers of the time, Plevitskaya.

Skoblin's name has been connected with three major scandals of the pre-War period: the kidnapping of General Kutyopov, head of the Russian Military Organisation in Paris; the kidnapping of his successor, General Miller, in 1937; and, perhaps most importantly, the production of the forgeries meant to be used against the leadership of the Red Army, alleging that they were "Nazi spies". Until recently, Skoblin's name was seldom mentioned in the Soviet media and always as "a German agent". In the West too, all kind of far-fetched theories had been voiced, trying to explain Skoblin's motives and behaviour.

Some new light has been shed on the activities of Soviet intelligence in Western Europe following the recent publication in Holland of a very well-informed book dedicated to "the Dutch connection" of Walter Krivitsky and Ignaz Reiss, two major Soviet agents, whose defection was a *cause célèbre* at the time.[1] Furthermore, last December the Soviet weekly *Nedelya* published a long account in three instalments on the Skoblin affair. For the first time it was conceded that the General had been a Soviet agent since 1930. The writer, Leonid Mikhailov, obviously had access to *NKVD* archives. He quotes dozens of reports by and about Skoblin, fully or *in extenso*. It is equally certain that he saw a sanitised version, and that his account was heavily censored.

General Kutyopov (we are told) was indeed kidnapped by the Soviets in a Paris street and put on a Soviet steamer in the harbour of Marseilles. According to this version, he died on board ship somewhere between Istanbul and Novorossiysk. The writer implies that Kutyopov would have been put on trial in view of the crimes he committed during the Civil War. This is almost certainly wrong. For any such step would have led to a break in diplomatic relations between France and the Soviet Union, and this was about the last thing the Soviets wanted. It is far more likely that Kutyopov was killed either inadvertently at the time of the kidnapping, or on board the ship because it was realised that he was a liability. He was 48 years of age and in reasonably good health; he might have died because of acute melancholia or fear or depression, but this is not very likely. In any case, Skoblin had nothing to do with this affair, because he was recruited only after Kutyopov's disappearance.

The Soviet agent who made the first approach to General Skoblin was P. G. Kovalsky, a former comrade-in-arms, who had entered Soviet service several years earlier. He visited Skoblin on his farm near Marseilles, and appealed to his patriotism as well as to his ambitions—he was promised employment in the Soviet General Staff. Kovalsky also found out that Skoblin could use a monthly retainer. He had rented a vineyard and as a result of misfortune or mismanagement he had run up debts. He was promised (and given) 200 dollars a month. He received the nickname "Farmer" (code number E.Zh.13). Mrs Skoblin, who also expressed her desire to collaborate, became "Mrs Farmer". In the following years Skoblin kept his new masters in Moscow well informed with regard to the politics of the White Russian emigration. According to Mikhailov, the Soviet authorities, due to Skoblin, caught some 17 agents and terrorists who had been infiltrated into the Soviet Union. It is not entirely clear, even in retrospect, why they should have attributed so much importance to the activities of the Russian emigration which did not constitute any real danger to existing Soviet power. It might have been connected with Stalin's paranoia—he often tended to see enemies where they did not exist, or where they were of little consequence, as in the case of the émigré Trotskyites.

Since 1935 Skoblin had been suspected among the Russian émigrés of cooperating with the Soviet secret services, partly because of the defection of another agent, partly because Skoblin was not a very cautious man. Burtsev, the great detective of the Russian community (he had unmasked Azev the spy before World War I), became interested in Skoblin. He followed a wrong lead, believing that Plevitskaya, Skoblin's wife, had collaborated with the Soviets since 1918. Nevertheless, Skoblin's masters succeeded in shielding him and but for his involvement in the kidnapping of General Miller, he might not have been discovered at all.

Leonid Mikhailov's revelations shed no light on why the Soviet authorities should have decided to abduct this elderly and incompetent senior officer. Miller had nothing to do with the infiltration of agents into the Soviet Union; in fact, he opposed this strategy. While he headed the Russian

[1] Igor Cornelissen, *De GPOe op de Overtoom* (Amsterdam, 1989). This book is of particular interest in view of the light it sheds on Theodor Maly, the man who recruited Kim Philby in the early 1930s.

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Officers' association the Soviets had little to fear from émigré designs.

Nevertheless, in the summer of 1937 it was decided in Moscow to abduct Miller. Skoblin invited Miller to his home outside Paris under the pretext that a representative of the German *Abwehr* wanted to meet him. From this moment (22 September 1937), all traces of both Miller and Skoblin were lost. Miller had left word with friends that he was to meet Skoblin; and when he failed to return from his appointment, the hunt was on and Skoblin had to disappear. According to Mikhailov, Skoblin was hidden in the home of Sergei Tretyakov (an industrialist, minister in the Kolchak government) who also happened to be a Soviet agent. Several months later Skoblin was sent with new documents to Spain where he died "in circumstances which have remained mysterious to this day".

While the first part of the story sounds plausible, the second almost certainly belongs to the realm of disinformation. There was no work for Skoblin in Spain; furthermore, there were not a few Russians who knew him in both camps in the Civil War. In brief, almost any other country would have provided a more likely haven for a man on the run. It is far more likely that Skoblin was liquidated by his employers soon after the Miller kidnapping because they had no more use for him.

WHAT BECAME OF General Miller? Mikhailov reports he was put on a Soviet ship in Le Havre and arrived in Leningrad on 29 September 1937. Soon afterwards he was sentenced to death by a Soviet court for crimes against the Soviet people. That he was killed seems certain, whether the Soviet authorities bothered to go through any legal formalities is less certain.

According to Mikhailov's revelations, most of the people who were involved in the Skoblin affair died a violent death; which is to say perished in the Stalinist purges of the late 1930s. This includes Kovalsky, who had recruited Skoblin, and most of the residents and agents of the *NKVD* in Western Europe, so that "at the beginning of the War the country virtually had no strategic secret service".

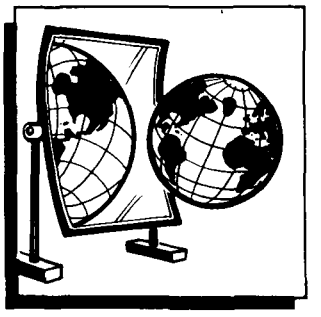
These Skoblin revelations are of considerable interest both for what they contain and for what they omit to say. There is not a word about Skoblin's collaboration with the Nazi secret service, even though he was on Heydrich's pay-roll and played a role in the preparation of the forgeries that were to be used in the Moscow trial against the Red Army Command. This aspect of the affair—in some respects the most interesting one—seems to be as yet too hot to handle. As for the rest, the mixture of truth, half truths, and disinformation will provide in the years to come much food for thought for Western students of the by-ways of Soviet and émigré politics in the 1930s.

In the final analysis one should perhaps not complain that the "revelations" contain enormous gaps and many untruths. More important is the fact that some of the material is undoubtedly correct, that the respective files have not been destroyed and are kept "somewhere". Thus it may be only a question of time until the whole truth about this murky affair will at last be known.

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

Virtue's Vice



AN AIR OF optimism nowadays surrounds what is known as "the democratic revolution". Everywhere you look, whether in the Communist world or in the Third World, conferences, books, and articles applaud its progress or hail its premonitory symptoms. Nor is everything about this euphoric vision entirely unjustified, even if certain commentators are too apt to take the first stirrings for the finished process. Virtually throughout Latin America people have been voting or are preparing to vote and, except in Panama and Nicaragua, flagrant electoral fraud is becoming a thing of the past.

On the other hand there is not one true democracy in Africa or the Arab world. The trend may be favourable to democracy, but there is a slight dragging of feet when it comes to putting it into practice. The writers who 30 years ago pronounced the death of ideologies have not, in the end, been proved wrong—if, that is, we agree not to confuse religious fanaticism (currently very virulent) with political ideologies, which are essentially different.

What has not died is what might be termed ideological *behaviour*: the refusal to face reality. A recent trip to Latin America left me with the painful impression that the return to democratic institutions there lacks an essential moral ingredient without which such institutions can never work in practice: namely, a sense of responsibility. I mentioned the problem of the corruption of political élites in conversation with a member of the Paraguayan Government. He replied—in all seriousness—that the true culprit was the secretiveness of Swiss banks. The real cause of theft, in other words, is the tree beneath which the burglar buries his swag!

Given its vast resources, Brazil ought to have a higher standard of living than Japan. Yet the Brazilians reject any idea that poverty in their country could possibly be first and foremost their own fault, several decades of bad government and bad management having squandered the fruits of a once brilliant growth rate. These are mistakes that the re-establishment of democracy has failed to correct—on the contrary, Brazil has just landed itself with a new Constitution that is both monstrous and impracticable.

Forty years ago, Argentina was one of the wealthiest countries in the world; Peronism ruined it in masterly fashion. And what did the people of Argentina do recently but elect another Peronist to serve as their President!

The famous debt provides a useful scapegoat. Unfortu-

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nately, no one can tell you what the original loan was used for, or furnish guarantees as to how any fresh loans will be used. Sole blame for the borrower's coming to grief lies, apparently, with the lender. Of course rich nations ought to lighten the burdens of debtor governments. But the latter ought to learn that there is more to managing an economy than contracting debts. Aside from the Mexican President Carlos Salinas and the Uruguayan President Julio Sanguinetti, Latin America's rulers substitute imprecations for action. Nor does the new guard look much better. Of all the candidates for forthcoming presidential elections, only Mario Vargas Llosa of Peru talks in realistic terms, and that has led to him being accused of (guess what!) lack of patriotism.

The economies of Latin America are stifled by parasitic public sectors that are difficult to touch since they constitute the pantry of political patronage. It is easy to nationalise: a signature at the bottom of a decree or a law is all it needs. Privatisation takes longer. But the desire to privatise is not enough; first you have to hoist the enterprises concerned up to the level of profitability.

"The democratic revolution" is a reality, compared with the dismal situation of a few years ago. But it is threatened from two sides. On one side there is the classic threat of dictatorship. On the other—the equally formidable threat of anarchy. . . .

Pierres roulantes

By David A. Bell

"BUSH A DEALÉ *avec Noriega*" declares the advertisement for the French edition of *Rolling Stone*. "*Dealé*"? The French get notoriously stuffy on the subject of their language, but barbarisms like this make one sympathise. Unfortunately, it seems that French journalists, having long ago worn out everything in their own language closet, must now rummage in ours to remain "in" (itself a recent acquisition, pronounced "een"—for instance, "*Madonna est très in*"). As a result, old mainstays like "*le leader*", "*le meeting*", and "*le weekend*" now jostle for space in the magazine columns with neologisms like "*le comeback*", "*le flashback*", and "*l'insider*". Only occasionally does the use of English have any real wit, as in *Rolling Stone*'s own slogan, "*un news, pas le blues*". Even worse, some hacks have decided that English nouns are not "*een*" enough without an accompanying adjective. Hence "*le high-tech*", "*le hit parade*", "*le star system*", and "*le new look*".

Clearly, the more these linguistic intruders clash with the natural rhythms of the French language, the better. ("*le clash*" is another import, by the way.) Perhaps, if the trend continues at the current rate, French will one day disappear altogether. Already, most French scientific journals publish in English. Well, at least this way future generations will be spared the past anterior tense.

Despite the erosion of the language, many other aspects of French life remain quirkily impervious to change. In the French legal system, for instance, it is still illegal to practise certain professions unless you have bought the right to do so—a practice first introduced in the 16th century. You can only become a notary, for instance, by buying or inheriting the office of another notary. (French notaries do much the same work as English solicitors.) The same rule holds true for the chief clerks and bailiffs of some courts, and even for lawyers practising before the *Conseil d'État* and the *Cour de Cassation* (France's supreme court). The system functions just like the New York City "Taxi Medallion" system, and just as in New York, the lucky owners of offices constitute a powerful, entrenched, and wealthy monopoly. I have even heard of a notary who bought himself a *château* near Bordeaux. The chief clerk of Paris's busy Commercial Court, Maître Regnard, runs his profitable office as a virtual corporation, with 343 employees who work for him, not for the state—all by virtue of having inherited the office from his father.

A different, but equally vibrant French tradition is slippery relations with the Middle East. Back in the Renaissance, when the Ottoman Empire was gobbling up large chunks of Christian Europe, France was the first major European power to become its ally. One can hardly reproach the French on this point, since the Ottomans were from many points of view the more civilised half of this alliance—in their treatment of religious minorities, for instance. But the tradition continued long after this had ceased to be the case. Only two years ago, the then Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, "miraculously" arranged the release of France's last hostages in Lebanon just days before the Presidential elections which pitted him against François Mitterrand (was it arms for hostages, or just souls for hostages?). And last spring Mitterrand himself welcomed Yasser Arafat to the Élysée Palace with all the pomp befitting a head of state.

True, Arafat "paid" for the symbolic recognition by coming up with yet another rhetorical concession, declaring the PLO Charter "*caduc*" (meaning "null and void", a very non-"in" word that sent non-French journalists rushing for their *Larousses*). But did the French Foreign Ministry have to schedule the visit for 2 May, the day of mourning for the victims of the Holocaust? The lack of sensitivity (which spurred large protests from the Parisian Jewish community) is particularly surprising because Foreign Minister Roland Dumas's father had been killed by the Nazis (in part for helping Jews). The whole affair recalls the former Prime Minister Raymond Barre's notorious comment, after the attack on the Rue Copernic synagogue in 1978, to the effect that "one innocent Frenchman was killed"—thus ignoring the three French-Jewish victims of the outrage.

IN MANY WAYS, of course, France is far less of an anti-Semitic country than, say, the United States. Prominent among the French politicians already jockeying for position in the 1995 presidential election (yes, 1995—and Americans think their

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long-drawn-out campaigns are ridiculous) is the Jewish-born former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, who follows in a long and honourable tradition that includes Léon Blum, Pierre Mendès-France, and Michel Debré. Can someone of Jewish descent, even today, be taken seriously as a presidential candidate in the United States?

Yet, in other ways, an ugly past lurks all too closely beneath the surface of daily life here. The National Front leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, is well known for his crude anti-Semitic remarks, while easily-available, quasi-respectable publications like *National Hebdo* regularly print more subtle barbs. A glossy journal entitled *Annales du révisionisme* (i.e., of the Holocaust) is easily found on news-stands, along with a vile daily called *Présent*, which chronicles the activities of "the Jewish international". And then there are comments like Barre's. French friends have long tried to persuade me that those particular comments were not, in fact, evidence of insensitivity. Barre, they point out, is among the most tolerant, upright and honourable of French politicians.

Actually, I agree. Barre's conduct during the last presidential campaign, when he helped keep Chirac from courting Le Pen voters, was particularly admirable. But this is precisely the point. When even the least bigoted politicians are apt to let slip a comment like Barre's, it points to certain ingrained beliefs—about who is "really" French—which have not yet been wholly eradicated.

Speaking of intolerance, the French were as interested as anyone else last winter in "*l'affaire Rushdie*". Yet, oddly, few pointed out a precedent in French history for the uproar: the Enlightenment itself. Today, Voltaire, Diderot, and the rest appear in the history books primarily as pioneers of religious toleration. Yet in the name of this toleration, the *philosophes* were actively, concertedly hostile to organised religion; indeed they sometimes strove to be as offensive to it as possible. As the historian Robert Darnton likes to point out, anyone who cares to look up "Cannibalism" in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* will find a pawky note at the end reading: "See also 'Holy Communion'." Voltaire summed up his attitude towards the Catholic Church in the handy motto "*Écrasez l'infâme*"—"Crush the infamous thing". He may have held that he would defend to the death his opponent's right to speak, but it is hard to imagine his actually doing so for the Pope.

LET US HOPE that the West's own fundamentalists do not start reading the *philosophes*. Perhaps the crowd that bayed for Martin Scorsese's blood in the summer of 1988 will soon be trying to ban *Candide* and Diderot's scalding *La religieuse* from their local libraries. One can almost imagine earnest, hand-wringing newspaper columnists agonising over whether books that deeply wound so many believers deserve a place in the already-shaky "canon" of the French classics. (Remember the big fuss about *Huckleberry Finn* in America a couple of years back?)

It won't happen, of course, but the image reveals how insufficient it is to condemn Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* simply because it is "offensive" to Muslins. Our Western culture is partly based on works that gave offence to believers far more deliberately, effectively, and profoundly, than *The Satanic Verses*, and this at a time when the large majority of Westerners were deeply religious. Yet today we approve of these works.

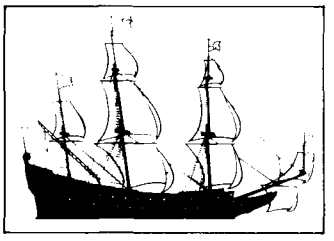
Of course, Voltaire was right: the 18th-century Catholic Church *was* an infamous thing in many respects. Thus we have a paradox: to judge early modern Europe by the standards we apply to 20th-century Islam—that is to say, respecting above all the "integrity" of its culture (Western culture at the time included not only Plato and Aristotle, but also the divine right of kings, slavery, and breaking on the wheel)—is to denounce our own rebellious intellectual ancestors. The same logic which condemns Salman Rushdie condemns the men who directly inspired the Founding Fathers of the United States and the French Revolution.

Is this really what we want to be doing? Perhaps, instead of worrying so much about the "integrity" of foreign cultures, we should try judging them by the same standards by which we judge our ancestors. After all, what is the Enlightenment if not universal? Khomeini's blood-drenched theocracy was no less infamous because it sprang from deep within Islamic Persian culture, just as the Catholic Church of the Inquisition was no less infamous for having sprung from deep within Christian culture.

Alas, if Voltaire came back to life today, he would find no shortage of infamous things to crush. As they might say in Paris, "*L'infâme est toujours très in*".

Of Lives & Politics

By Patrick Cosgrave



STUDENTS OF modern British political history (and especially those, like myself, with a particular interest in Enoch Powell) owe a very special debt to Michael Strachan. In 1942 the two men set off in a battered Army lorry (nicknamed "Pinafore") to travel across North Africa from Algiers to Cairo, where they intended to seek new posts in Army Intelligence. Strachan subsequently wrote an account of that journey (it was published in February 1952 in *Blackwood's Magazine*) which is certainly the finest and one of the most important memoirs of Powell written to date. It is, by turns, touching and hilarious; and it is couched in the delightfully pellucid prose that readers cannot fail to revere (as they revered Strachan's earlier account—published nearly 30 years ago—of the life and adventures of the 17th-century traveller Thomas Coryate). The friendship formed between the two travellers during the desert journey

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persists; and it was Powell, indeed, who suggested Sir Thomas Roe, the 16th- and 17th-century explorer, diplomat and politician, as a fit subject for Strachan.[1]

Roe was a figure of considerable substance, until now almost forgotten, except by specialists. Enoch Powell will be more familiar; and the Powell we have come to know and love (or hate, as the case may be) was described and analysed as to almost every particular of his quirky personality in Strachan's exceptional essay. What is more, the exchanges on the journey contributed very greatly to the formation of the later Powell, both as to personality and interests.

The two men could not have been more different: Powell the introverted scholar, Strachan the Scottish gentleman of leisured tastes. Moreover, while Strachan was practical, Powell was the reverse, and could scarcely drive their lorry without danger. When it came to Powell's turn to cook, mild disaster arrived. He was attempting sausages. The fire declined its office. He poured petrol over it. His moustache was singed. Opening the sausage tin, he cut his finger:

> "'Oh the malice—the cursed, diabolical malice of inanimate objects!' muttered the Professor ferociously between clenched teeth. 'Here, let me help', I said. 'You keep away', he snarled, 'If they want to be bloody-minded, I'll show them, by God I will', booting the empty sausage tin into a cactus bush."

What Strachan divined was that Powell's impatience was with himself and his inability to master the requirements of rough cooking. "People less acute and less energetic . . .", writes Strachan, "that is virtually every other human being with whom he came into contact, were very liable to excite his wrath." Almost anybody who had dealings with the later Powell would recognise the accuracy of that judgment. They might not realise that Powell made it of himself as well.

On the journey, and in order to preserve a civilised relationship, the men agreed to be each other's tutors. From Powell, Strachan received a crash course in classical history. In return he taught the Professor of country pursuits, and particularly of riding to hounds, which became a life-long interest. They reached Cairo with Strachan anxious only for sleep, and Powell agog to go to his first polo match, and to scour the bookshops for texts on fox-hunting.

After the War, Strachan went into the shipping business, rising to be chairman of his company; while Powell, as we know, went into politics. As Strachan's interests rubbed off on Powell, however, so the reverse happened as well. Strachan began to write—but slowly, far too slowly. He produced some essays (including one, on his experiences as an interrogation officer, marked by both pathos and humour) which should be collected, and the two books on Coryate and on Roe. They are both fine works of scholarship and style but his heart is, I feel, in Roe—who was, anyway, the more substantial figure.

[1] *Sir Thomas Roe: A Life, 1581-1644*. By MICHAEL STRACHAN. Michael Russell, £19.95.

Even by the standards of *bravura* set in the Elizabethan age, Sir Thomas Roe was a remarkable man. His early life was spent as a courtier of the great Elizabeth, but he went on to serve another princess of the same name—the Winter Queen of the Palatine whose husband's folly precipitated the Thirty Years War, and to whom he remained devoted until death. He assisted Howard of Effingham in a Spanish Embassy of 1605, took a hand in the Royal Council for the settlement of Virginia in 1607, and in 1610 led an expedition to Guiana. By 1614 he was a Member of Parliament, demonstrating great diplomatic skill and, incidentally, becoming the principal begetter of the system by which the House of Commons keeps a proper record of its proceedings.

IN 1615 HE WAS sent as the King's Ambassador to the Mogul Court in India. Here he outmanoeuvred French, Portuguese, and the tipsy monarch alike, and thus began the process which led to the British Empire in India. Hardly home (and again, briefly, an MP) and he was packed off to Constantinople: he spent four years there, to the great benefit of his country's trade and foreign interests. Poland, Germany, Austria and Holland followed, and he has a certain claim to have altered the European balance of power by his activity in the tangled affairs of the Thirty Years War.

But the shadows were drawing in. In successive Stuart courts Roe stood out by virtue of his honesty, his integrity, and his intelligence. (His contributions to the theory of international commerce and the science of navigation were full of insight and, of course, profound knowledge.) The Stuarts, however, did not like talent amounting to genius, even in their most loyal servants. As the royal conflict with Parliament deepened, Roe further blotted his copybook by insisting that compromise was possible. It was not. He died of what can only be called a broken heart, and his master Charles I was beheaded. It was a sad end to a great life.

The archival material bearing on Roe's life is fragmentary and scattered. To bring to life that gifted, grave, humorous and handsome combination of brave soldier, wise statesman, and penetrating *savant* would be a major achievement for any full-time scholar with the resources of a great university behind him. Strachan has done it in the interstices of a busy life—and few scholars can be found who write as well as he does. He is free, moreover, of the besetting sin of the modern biographer: reading overmuch into incomplete sets of papers. In discussing Roe's Guiana expedition, for example, he is greatly hampered by the fact that so little material survives. But, when Michael Strachan hazards an hypothesis, you feel absolute confidence that he has got it right: his judiciousness can be felt on every page. The book is, in its presentation, a tribute to publisher, author and subject alike. Today's historians owe Strachan a debt for resuscitating Roe. The shade of Roe owes a debt too: a man of fine taste, he would appreciate such a handsome memorial.

It seems to me, though, ineffably sad that two of Strachan's three subjects ended their public careers in defeat. But then, as Enoch Powell once said, ". . . that is the nature of politics and of human affairs".

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Isms & Ologies

Recent Shakespeare Criticism—By MARTIN ELLIOTT

WERE WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE a mandrake he would be crying out incessantly these days. In the interest of "radical Shakespeare" so much uprooting has occurred that one fears for the Bard's canonical health. His roots exposed—as straggly "right" *and* straggly "left"—can this poor, forked, merely Renaissance (and late Renaissance at that) writing animal survive the research of us moderns? Probably yes, given the quality (in the main) of the uprooters.

Kiernan Ryan's *Shakespeare* volume in the Harvester New Readings series is a lesser monster than most in having only 109 pages of text (for £25.00!) and in proposing some debatable things about, for example, Macbeth.[1] The Thane of Cawdor thinks it wrong to murder anyone, let alone a king—but why, then, does Shakespeare present the Thane of Glamis as a near-psychopath who loves to have his sword asmoke with blood so long as the cause is good? Again, the extramural and, by extension, outlawish position of the public playhouses in Shakespeare's time is rightly stressed, since this carries over into the content of the plays, which are self-questioning of the very genres they purport to represent. (Obvious example: *Hamlet* and revenge tragedy.) Shakespeare is multi-vocal, therefore, and needs to be reappropriated from the Establishment (whatever and wherever that is) which has virtually canonised him as a Great Norm whose truths are outside time and above history.

The argument's difficulty is this: that in asserting Shakespeare's multi-vocalism you are already suggesting in what his longevity consists—it is, after all, the variety of his characterisations, beside his use of language of course, which makes him survive. Shakespeare is not just one of those Elizabethan/Jacobean dramatists recreated, so to speak, by post-Eliotic academics on the prowl for something to write about. He is not merely one of a minor school in English Literature. He does not date as Middleton, Dekker, even Webster date. There *is* something vaguely universal about him—and this the New Readings Shakespeare implicitly recognises when it stresses its subject's complexity: *Othello* "is not a study of a thinly civilised noble savage reverting under pressure to his real 'primal' self"; the play "involves rather the more complex exposure of a white barbarian, who tries to turn a more civilised black man into his degrading image of the kind of creature a Moor ought to be".

True up to a point. But is Othello civilised—a civil, political resident of a city state living at peace with his neighbours? Does he not rather contemn the thrice-driven bed of down that is Venice, whose *moeurs* he so neglects that he steals away by night with one of her leading daughters? The book is correct in its idea that Shakespeare demonstrates the gap between man's hopes and what man actually achieves. But this is hardly a new reading. There is in Shakespeare's work "a passion for perfection" which "appears to engender . . . evil within itself" and loses "not only evil but priceless good" (A. C. Bradley on the Tragedies, in 1904).

"Evil" and "good"—both outmoded. The universal of "anonymity" remains, however, in the unstylishness of much Shakespeareana (ugly word) today. *Renaissance Dramatists*[2] seems to belong less to Kathleen McLuskie than to a collected voice of the seminarists, co-conferers, and other talkers she has professionally "interfaced with": ". . . the Royal Shakespeare Company and others had been producing a steady diet of other plays. . . . Some critics . . . did feel that something new was afoot." Diet? Afoot? The words are used as clichés (thoughtlessly), not as the metaphors that they are. Her book derives from one of the isms of the moment—feminism—and attempts feminism's necessary task: look at the male dramatists, look at the late Renaissance female lot, and so disclose how women are under- or misrepresented on stage.

THE DIFFICULTY IS, of course, the lack of evidence. As far as can be ascertained, women regarded themselves as second to their men, and their "careers" were defined by marriage (or non-marriage) and by children. When a wife became dominant or adulterous, she and her husband risked ordeal by "skimmington" (i.e. rough riding or charivari), a mocking processional practice in which several neighbours might carry another man to the discords of shawms, bagpipes, drums and such. Thus was public attention drawn to the "unacceptable private behaviour of married couples". But how common

[1] *Shakespeare*. By KIERNAN RYAN. Harvester Wheatsheaf, "New Readings" Series, £25.00.

[2] *Renaissance Dramatists*. By KATHLEEN MCLUSKIE. Harvester Wheatsheaf, "Feminist Readings" Series, £9.95.

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these skimmingtons were is uncertain, since they merited comment only when they, like the wives, became unruly.

The author's hours spent reading Renaissance books has pulled out some pleasant phrases—the playhouse as "chappel of Satan"; and man (the male human) as the "smelsmocke" species. Meanwhile the sociological findings—that, for example, socio-sexual repression is stronger in times of poverty; and that cross-dressing in the theatre was defended on the grounds of its having a pure and limited purpose—tend to the non-sequitorial.

AT THIS POINT one might ask: why *are* so many academic books so . . . well, academic? Answer: because they are mostly produced in academe, or rather in the vacations and on sabbaticals. And what is it about academe that makes these books so academic in the bad sense? Probable answer: many of the staff in higher education write because it is expected of them and because the journals exist that will publish them. And so academics write in an unexcited state, in a samey style, with a feeling of unpleasurable struggle, and for a specialised market (it would be interesting to know the readership of a typical article in, say, *English Literary Renaissance*). Although each paper or tome has at least *some*thing to say, one becomes rather tired of having to work so hard in finding it. The regular reading of Shakespeare and other good writers does not, alas, necessarily ensure good writing by his critics and scholars. There are several grey eminences around whose books and articles achieve a cover-to-cover blandness; so that the contents have departed the mind by the time the book is closed. (There are exceptions to this scandalous generalisation—their names will be well known.)

If this near-universal law—that intelligent and erudite folk do not, on the whole, write memorably—applies to our most senior traditionalists, what can we expect from their juniors, caught up as they often are in some ism or other? Probably something like John Collick's *Shakespeare, Cinema and Society*,[3] where style is less obvious than an ideological drumming. The naivety is attacked of those who think art has a single creative identity and who cannot realise that a work of art is produced by a society (as a film is produced by an industry?). Just as Shakespeare's plays were traditionally interpreted as supporting a capitalist ideology, so a film like Olivier's *Henry V* reasserts the notion of a "national, middle-class identity". The film ignores Henry's more questionable traits as inscribed by Shakespeare, excluding such scenes as the threats to Harfleur and the murder of the French prisoners. And in its mixture of settings—on stage and backstage at the Globe, or an artificial France based on the Limbourgs' Book of Hours, or the "golf-course" (Orson Welles) of the battlefield—it united all Englishmen (king with nobles and common men) into a happy band of a few brothers who were opposing first the French in the early 15th century and then the Germans in the 1940s; and who were implicitly in the business of promoting a particular set of class values as natural and eternal.

This "Establishment" response to the Bard has been so strong and ubiquitous that even foreign film productions have been "jammed". Kozintsev's Russian *Hamlet*, which used Pasternak's translation, was subtitled into English using Shakespeare's original text. Is there no limit to the wickedness of cultural imperialism?

All ideology aside, I remember the Russian *Hamlet* for the superb playing and for the effective "dressing": the brutal armour, the sheer thickness of Elsinore's walls, Ophelia's being cruelly encaged in metal corseting before the farthingale is lowered down on her. This last may be a comment on Renaissance upper-class subjection of women; it is comparable with the lowering of the armoured French knights on to their horses in *Henry V* (dangling from cranes, the Frenchies were made to look ridiculous, while Harry himself, also in full armour, is much more nimble).

Other foreign filmings of the Bard have been allowed greater latitude. The Russian *Hamlet* lacked a fatal flaw (whatever it might be), the hero being the victim of social realism in the rotten regality of Denmark. Similarly, the Japanese version of *Macbeth* (by Akira Kurosawa) presented the Scotch thane in terms of the *Noh* tradition, which since the 15th century had included such items as feudal wars and the infusion of the human world by gods. Demons, warriors, women, madness viewed as a higher wisdom—these were common in the *Noh* play. Kurosawa uses *Macbeth* to demonstrate the defects of a military system in which loyalty is less common than disloyalty. "There is never any suggestion of social or religious sin among all this betrayal."

Increasingly one is made to realise that Shakespeare in foreign film is probably a contradiction in terms; and that the phrase "from an idea by William Shakespeare" would be far more germane. The vaguely Marxist programme of the book gives but the briefest mention of Polanski's fascinating version of *Macbeth* (financially linked with Bob Guccione of *Penthouse*), but carefully delineates the capitalist pressures that made the BBC Shakespeare series more or less a failure: these were the BBC's educative policy, the need to appeal to foreign markets, and the demands of the American corporation sponsors (bland, bland, and more bland).

It is perhaps contrary to John Collick's intention that the

[3] *Shakespeare, Cinema and Society*. By JOHN COLLICK. Manchester University Press, "Cultural Politics" Series, £29.95.

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book's most enjoyable moments are when he slips into near-anecdote. I would have liked to observe Beerbohm Tree filming the Runnymede "short" from *King John* on the north bank of the Thames (Adelphi Terrace) at the turn of the century; while James Cagney as Bottom and Mickey Rooney as Puck in the 1935 Warner production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would now be attractive by reason of nostalgia as well as of technical curiosity. Finally, if you ever wondered why so much of the verse and prose in Welles's *Othello* and *Chimes at Midnight* is spoken away from camera, here is the answer: the backviews made for easier dubbing. Once again we are back in the sub-genre of "From an idea by . . . ."

BOOKS THAT UPROOT Shakespeare . . . books that replant him in his own time and place. From the new Radicalism, Feminism, and Marxism to the new Historicism. (How conveniently rallying these labels are—the equivalent in lit. crit. of God, Harry, and St George, newish standards for scholars to fall back on when they have no ideas of their own?) In practice, the new historicism is usually less programmatic and more scholarly than the other ideologies; and its main research tool is much reading of old manuscripts or old printed books. It smacks more of the library than of the soapbox. John D. Cox's *Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power*[4] is based on a range of such readings from Augustine to an early 17th-century puritan named Daniel Dyke. It can therefore authoritatively declare (among other things) that "Augustine's influence on Dyke unfortunately did not improve his style, for the English Puritan is repetitive and given to scholastic hairsplitting".

But the Augustinian connection is arguably less interesting than the main theme of the book, which concerns, first, the Tudor separation of style into high and low, and secondly, Shakespeare's and other dramatists' rather radical (and medieval) remingling of them. There is an excellent summary quite early on of the Eltonian Tudor Revolution in government (now not totally accepted), which centralised power at the courts of the Henries VII and VIII. The new, meritocratic men arrived, Wolseys and Cromwells and, later, the upwardly mobile such as Shakespeare; and these (including Shakespeare in his private life) had an arriviste's attraction to the high: to the formal, the elaborate, the ostentatious.

It was Shakespeare's dramatic achievement to go against that centralised high-and-mightiness in plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard III*. In these and others he made a "qualification of privilege". A rude mechanical in asinine translation will have a queen, albeit not a "real" one. A king will be presented as a Vice. In a later play like *Measure for Measure* the styles are promiscuously mixed in the encounters of Vincentio and Lucio, so that a medieval mixing of king and clown is staged. This is not merely a "stylistic choice" but a social and moral matter. Lucio has an ancestry going back at least to a stock character called Raise Slander in *The Trial of Mary and Joseph* in the *Nomen*-Town plays (a cycle of 15th-century mystery-plays associated with East Anglia). And in the Histories the character of Hal leading into Henry the Fifth is a descendent of that benign trickster, God, who adopted human forms in other medieval dramas. The final embodiment of this tradition in Shakespeare is Prospero. Like Vincentio he expresses the Baconian view of the cosmic principle, which is that of the sheephook, necessarily crooked at the top.

Since Shakespeare's dependence on the dramas of the Middle Ages is better displayed outside the tragic sequence (the book claims), the Tragedies are discussed only briefly. Horatio's presence at (or in?) Elsinore is explained—he is only seemingly indifferent, since in reality he is attending on the Danish court in hope of advancement. And the Tragedies are seen anyway (quite rightly) as more complex than tragic, since their heroes are much more complicated than the Senecan stoic heroes, whose business was merely to endure and orate. This Shakespeare, the medievally-minded one—who, as Peter Levi's *The Life and Times of William Shakespeare*[5] reminds us, was closer to Chaucer and probably used him more than we realise—is akin to the Shakespeare who exploited for his dramas the essentially medieval world picture which E. M. Tillyard retitled "Elizabethan".

THE STUDY OF that world picture must now, presumably, be called "new historicism". By reading John Mebane's *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age*,[6] and examining the works of such scholars as Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, one can correct one's ignorance about the intellectual efforts of Renaissance magi: they wished to acquire supernatural power without becoming necessarily blasphemous in a Fausty way. Prospero can feature again as the super-magus of them all, since he has suppressed his base passions and developed his higher faculties, thereby obtaining a command over the forces of nature.

This view of Prospero as a recognisable Jacobean type of thinker lights up not only *The Tempest* but also a major theme that goes through the Shakespeare canon as a whole—the governor of others must first of all be self-governing. If he is not, then civil discord will ensue. This is true of *Othello*, which is full of characters losing command of themselves, even down to Montano, who was "wont to be civil"; and it is true of *Measure for Measure*, whose Duke Vincentio is curiously not mentioned in *Renaissance Magic*. The old fantastical Duke of dark corners does little but practise a desperate, almost-too-late alchemy on his less-than-golden subjects. It is curious, indeed, given Lucio's account of Vincentio as being a scholar inclined to strange fancies, that we are not shown Vincentio as a magus possessed of some magical capacity. But then this is a problem play, not a romance; and Shakespeare was already on dangerous ground enough, with his new royal patron, James the First, quite possibly monitoring him closely. Presumably Vincentio, having married Isabella, will gradually retire into his

[4] *Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power*. By JOHN D. COX. Princeton University Press, $29.50, £18.40.

[5] *The Life and Times of William Shakespeare*. By PETER LEVI. Macmillan, £7.99.

[6] *Renaissance Magic and The Return of the Golden Age*. By JOHN S. MEBANE. University of Nebraska Press, $39.45, £28.45.

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library, leaving the governing of Vienna to his new (and rigorous) young queen.

So much for the isms and the ologies. Now for some independents. Samuel Schoenbaum's *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (1977) will probably remain the standard biography for its scholarship and its style; so much so that Levi's new biography, *The Life and Times of William Shakespeare*, has little about the life and times that isn't taken from the splendid Sam. Needless to say, Levi acknowledges this as he enjoyably re-accretes conjectures where Schoenbaum pared them away. Did Dr Hall, the accomplished homoeopathic surgeon of Stratford who married Shakespeare's daughter Susanna, treat his father-in-law in his last illness and have him die in his arms? Just before this book was released some of Levi's other speculations about newly discovered and attributed work by the Bard were published to much publicity, and those studies are reprinted here. Although, as Muriel Bradbrook quietly asserts in *Shakespeare in his Context*, volume IV of her collected papers,[7] Levi's claim was demolished by James Knowles in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 29 April 1988, the occasional verses (for an emblem book of the Countess of Derby) still sound far more Shakespearean than one or two other recent attributions.

LEVI IS at his most enjoyable in his quirky discussions of the plays. The *Dream* was most probably *not* written for a particular marriage; and Shakespeare, self-delighted craftsman, must have laughed immoderately as he wrote "Pyramus and Thisbe", which is almost as bad as old Seneca's stuff. . . . Levi has an informal way of writing, which should make his biography a good introduction for students and the general market alike: "The sonnet sequence was a very popular form, and the stray sonnet of compliment an idle, almost a casual composition. Southampton got one in 1594. . . ." Or again: "It was not hard for Nashe to be a stunning lyric poet, because in his day you were that if you had any ear at all."

The Lady Derby mentioned earlier (patroness of Milton, Spenser, and perhaps Shakespeare in some degree) was a Spencer of Althorpe, and this Princess Diana connection can be used to remind us of the closeness to royal patronage that helped Shakespeare's career. Some of the new radicals among us might do well to ponder precisely on Shakespeare's dramatic position: he eventually became a Lord Chamberlain's Man and then a King's Man—and if he had not served that influential courtier and then that king (James the First), he might not have survived as a playmaker. Without the licences of such august personages, his company would have been an illegal organisation and the members technically answerable to the Poor Laws.

One of the many virtues of Richard Dutton's *William Shakespeare: A Literary Life*[8] is its emphasis on the political conditions of Shakespeare's life inside the polis of London and outside the wall in the suburbs. Not only for fear of the plague were the theatres threatened with permanent closure. Both Lord Mayor and Privy Council wanted the demolition of the Curtain and the Theatre in 1597 for the lewdness and potential disorder of the resorting populace. But someone, somewhere, stopped this extreme measure. Instead of banning the playhouses, why not closely monitor them? Is it any wonder that Shakespeare should flatter his royal licencer (as in *Macbeth*)? And is it not astonishing, the way he could trim his writings so as not to offend and yet retain his integrity?

From his proximity to the court, Shakespeare learned how to compromise, displacing current politics to Ancient Rome and other places and to earlier times, so that his Rome and Athens, his Venice and Vienna, are in some degree a kind of periphrasis. Dutton's book, too, is based on earlier biographical work (Chambers and Schoenbaum) but its theme of the literary life brings out some fascinating facts. For instance, commercial performances at the Globe had still to be justified from time to time as rehearsals for Court productions (an early preview system?). Again, it is pleasant to think of Shakespeare quite simply getting things wrong, as when Gloucester addresses the Lords Rivers, Woodville, and Scales as three persons in *Richard III*, whereas in the source-chronicle they are one and the same. And it is equally pleasant to learn that the historical Hotspur was 22 years older than Prince Hal: Shakespeare made him Hal's peer for dramatic effect.

[7] *Shakespeare in his Context: The Constellated Globe*. By MURIEL BRADBROOK. The Collected Papers of Muriel Bradbrook, Volume IV. Harvester Wheatsheaf, £20.00.

[8] *William Shakespeare: A Literary Life*. By RICHARD DUTTON. Macmillan, £27.50.

"Speak in French when you can't think of the English for a thing"

Lewis Carroll. Alice Through the Looking Glass

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Muriel Bradbrook—our white eminence of Shakespeare scholarship, most decidedly not one of those grey ones—will have no need to rap Dutton's knuckles, as she does those of other current critics and scholars. (On *The Merchant*: "Serious feminism will not serve here, any more than serious law." And on recent computer checks on authenticity: "The method was based on a count evolved . . . to compute the number of butterfly species in Malaysia.")

She also summarises the recent scholarly insights into Shakespeare's revisions of, for example, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Lear*; and given Shakespeare's own adapting abilities, one cannot fault in principle any rendition or spin-off of his works. *The Plantagenets*[9] is a particularly well-informed presentation of the York and Lancaster dramas, which makes big cuts in the three parts of *Henry VI* and redistributes the rest. *Henry the Sixth* becomes a new entity, taking us as far as the old Part 2, Act 2, Scene 3. Thereafter the old *Henry VI* becomes *The Rise of Edward the Fourth*; while *Richard III* becomes *Richard the Third, His Death*, more or less as in the original. The Royal Shakespeare Company has been performing these respectfully edited versions both as separate plays and in an omnibus edition. As such they are welcome (we are not in the critical condition of the Japanese student from whose *Romeo* all smut had been excised) since they come with the only "ology" that is acceptable—that of "enjoy-ism".

[9] *The Plantagenets*. By WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. Faber and Faber, £7.99.

Daily Bread

On György Petri—By CLIVE WILMER

IN JUNE 1958, a deposed Hungarian Prime Minister was sentenced to death *in camera* and secretly hanged for crimes against the state. Imre Nagy had presided over the brief movement for change in 1956, and this was his reward at the hands of the Soviet-sponsored régime. He and three of his associates were buried on the outskirts of Budapest in unmarked graves.

In June 1988, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of their deaths, a demonstration took place in the cemetery where the bodies were thought to lie. When the demonstrators proceeded into central Budapest, they were brutally dispersed by baton-wielding police. Eight months later, it was officially admitted that the events of 1956 had constituted a popular uprising, and last summer, when the 31st anniversary came round, the four martyrs were exhumed and reburied as national heroes. The ensuing events are familiar: the dissolution in October of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the declaration of a democratic republic, and progress towards free elections.

It is hard to say which is the more surprising: the speed of change, or that things should have changed at all. What ought not to astonish us is that all this has happened in Hungary; for that country has long been the forcing-ground for political experiment in the Eastern bloc. Under János Kádár, who led the government between 1956 and 1988, Hungary became the most Westernised, liberal, and consumer-oriented of the Warsaw Pact states. Kádár's New Economic Mechanism belongs to the same year—1968—as the Prague Spring. It escaped the Czechoslovak experiment's fate largely because of the Hungarian leader's pro-Soviet stance on foreign affairs and questions of official ideology. For Kádár, the ultimate pragmatist, had been brought to power by the Soviet invasion; and in the year of his reforms Hungarian troops took part in the crushing of the Prague Spring. But Kádár's liberalism was only skin-deep: he retreated from reform as soon as economic crisis struck. How appropriate it now seems that he should have been the first of the Eastern leaders to be overthrown by *perestroika*.

1956 and 1968 are among a cluster of dates, inescapable in modern Hungary, that punctuate the poems of György Petri. One of the more visible beneficiaries of the new reforms, Petri was born in Budapest in 1943, just over a year before the Soviet liberation of his country, and four-and-a-half before the Communist take-over. He was 12 at the time of the Soviet invasion and 24 when Czechoslovakia suffered her similar fate. During most of his childhood Hungary was subjected to the Stalinist dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi. From the literary point of view this meant that, for most of the 1950s, such distinguished and largely non-political poets as Sándor Weöres and János Pilinszky were virtually unable to publish. By the time Petri's first books appeared, well into the Kádár era, such restrictions had all but vanished. *Explanations for M.* (1971) and *Circumscribed Fall* (1974) were issued by a state publishing house; yet both would have been unpublishable less than 15 years before, and both contain poems that would still have been banned by most of Hungary's neighbours.

Given such freedoms, Petri's handling of his third and fourth collections may seem capricious. In Hungary, official recognition brings a poet prestige and privilege of a kind unknown in the West. But in the early 1980s Petri turned his back on such success: *Eternal Monday* (1982) and *What they Think . . .* (1985) were both published in *samizdat*. He

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was excluded from the literary magazines during most of the '80s, and regarded as *persona non grata* in the world of official literature. But what he lost in worldly success he made up for in artistic independence and authenticity of social vision.

JUST BEFORE the fall of Kádár in 1988, Petri's poems once more began to appear in literary journals, and in 1989 *It Exists Somewhere*, his selected poems, was legally published. From a further publication in the same year—*What They Left Out*—one can judge just how subversive a poet Petri is. Issued by an independent publisher, the book is exactly what its title suggests: a collection of all the poems excluded from the official selection.

Many of Petri's poems published in the 1980s are savage attacks on the political system of the Warsaw Pact as it then was. That being the case, his language is often obscene and vituperative, and *samizdat* was the obvious solution to a publishing problem. But if Petri had kept the most extreme poems in his drawer, he would have had a legally publishable book, so one must assume that *samizdat* was a deliberate choice.

This is not to say that Petri stood alone. In the late 1970s, as the government showed signs of retreating from liberalisation, an unofficial opposition began to appear; but the crucial event that drove Petri and others towards dissidence was the emergence of *Solidarity* in Poland—and Hungary's decision to ignore it. His satirical squib, "The Under-Secretary Makes a Statement", written before General Jaruzelski's imposition of martial law in 1981, reveals a profound identification with the Polish cause. Publication in *samizdat*, however, should also be seen as a personal declaration of independence.

From the outset, ideas of freedom have been central to Petri's concerns. As a young man he wanted to be a psychiatrist, and even worked for a time in the occupational therapy unit of a mental hospital. He soon realised "that in psychiatry there is more play of fantasy than reliable knowledge"; and at the age of 23 he went up to university, to study philosophy rather than psychology. His first two books have a marked philosophical element, and the conception of freedom that runs through them must surely derive from the existentialism then widely fashionable.

SEXUALITY is often the glass through which Petri discloses the nature of freedom. And the same is true of death. As the final limit on freedom, death is evoked by Petri with a morbid physicality and black humour that recall medieval literature. His view of sex is more ambivalent. It focuses the bleakness of the human condition: the temporary nature of our attachments, failures of communication, the mutability of the body, our ultimate loneliness. But it is also an instance and emblem of personal freedom: an activity pursued for its own sake, necessarily private, which no authority has power to control.

Through sexuality, in short, Petri stresses the continuity of the public and private spheres. In "Gratitude", perhaps the

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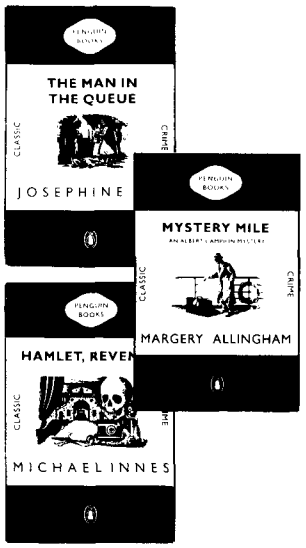

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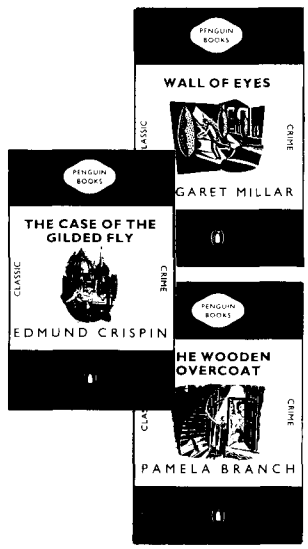

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finest of his early poems, the poet (or his persona) wakes to the noises of a public holiday after a night of love-making:

The idiotic silence of state holidays
is no different
from that of Catholic Sundays.
People in collective idleness
are even more repellent
than they are when purpose has harnessed them.

Today I will not
in my old ungrateful way
let gratuitous love decay in me.
In the vacuum of streets
what helps me to escape
is the memory of your face and thighs,
your warmth,
the fish-death smell of your groin.

The encounter is charged with a kind of gratuitous grace, to be set against the compulsions of Church and State.

Here, Petri's political concerns are heard as noises-off, but in the *samizdat* books existential freedom and political freedom are indistinguishable. In the mordantly ironic epigram "To be Said Over and Over Again", Petri "proves" that Hungary is not, after all, a prison:

I glance down at my shoe—and there's the lace!
This can't be gaol then, can it, in that case.

Kádár's Hungary had the appearance of a free society, all the trappings: a relatively unmuzzled press, economic enterprise, consumer goods, no obvious restrictions on artistic expression. But these things were there to buy off potential dissent. In reality, the country was like an open prison. The state granted the individual the right to exist and lead a normal life, but as a privilege that—like the notorious exit visas, now abolished—could easily be withdrawn.

In the background lies Petri's awareness that the government was itself the beneficiary of such "privileges"—and that in 1956 they had been withdrawn. This preoccupation accounts for the uncharacteristically sober tone of the recent elegy, "To Imre Nagy":

You were impersonal, too, like the other leaders,
bespectacled, sober-suited; your voice lacked
sonority, for you didn't know quite what to say

on the spur of the moment to the gathered multitude. This
urgency
was precisely the thing you found strange. I heard you,
old man in pince-nez, and was disappointed,
not yet to know

of the concrete yard where most likely the prosecutor
rattled off the sentence, or
of the rope's rough bruising, the ultimate shame.

Who can say what you might have said
from that balcony? Butchered opportunities, it is certain,
never return. Neither prison nor death
can resharpen the cutting edge of the moment
once it's been chipped. What we can do, though, is
remember

the hurt, reluctant, hesitant man
who none the less soaked up
anger, delusion
and a whole nation's blind hope,

when the town woke to gunfire
that blew it apart.

Petri's attitude to the political class is, however, better represented by the words of his "Electra":

Because of disgust, because it all sticks in my craw,
revenge has become my dream and my daily bread.
And this revulsion is stronger than the gods.

As the tone suggests, Petri is not to be coopted as pro-Western or anti-Communist or democratic Marxist. "Non-ideological anarchist" would be the nearest category, though even that is hardly to the point. His position is essentially and fruitfully negative, which explains why *samizdat* publication became the *sine qua non* of his poetry's authenticity.

It is Petri's tone, typified by "Electra", that makes his work so strikingly original. His use of myth and irony will not be unfamiliar to a reader acquainted with modern Polish poetry, but it is hardly typical of Hungarian work. Irony is of the essence, and he learned the use of it from foreign poets: from Eliot and Cavafy. The radical tradition of Hungarian poetry, descending from Petőfi and Vörösmarty, the hero-poets of 1848, through the Symbolist Endre Ady, to the modernist and Marxist Attila József, is nationalist, libertarian, romantic, and anything but ironic. Though they have been anxious to suppress nationalist overtones, the Communists have tended to claim this tradition as their own. Its rhetoric of justice and freedom—which Petri finds sympathetic—is thus no longer available to poetry; it has been compromised by the events of 1956 and the dead hand of the new Establishment.

What Petri picked up from Eliot in particular was a mode of indirection, a means of bypassing such rhetoric, undermining state-imposed obligations, and rediscovering roots of human responsibility in the particulars of relationships, as in "Stairs":

Who was it invented
circumscribed fall
—stairs,
which tame height, the frozen
perpendicular melted
down to degrees; and—
the cunning of the solution—
showed wingless man
the modest trick
of the detour, when he'd
try to jump
in vain after his glance?

Petri is wary of the ideal, on his guard against verbal inflation of any kind. This may recall other poets from Eastern Europe—Miroslav Holub and Zbigniew Herbert, for

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instance, accomplished ironists of the previous generation—but there the similarity ends. Petri is very much of his own generation in his awareness of language as an independent force that can construct reality in its own way. His addiction to word-play, for instance, makes much of his best work untranslatable. Often the full meaning of poems resides in a metalanguage, to be inferred by the reader, because Petri is not to be confined within the range of rhetoric he's prepared to allow himself.

Much of his poetry, like Eliot's, is refracted through the limitations of a pose. The persona seems to owe something to the "rogue and vagabond" tradition associated with François Villon; he characterises himself as the poet born to be hanged. Yet this self-consciously anti-social stance conceals the severity of a moralist. Petri differs from Herbert or Holub in the peculiarly all-out, unchained quality of his language—whether he broods on the intimate details of sex or verbally flays some swinish secret policeman. It sometimes occasions kinds of vocabulary, obscene or scatological, that are clearly supposed to shock—and probably do so more effectively in Hungary than in the permissive West.

In this salutary vigour, Petri is reminiscent of the great satirists of the past: Juvenal, say, or Jonathan Swift. He is perhaps the outstanding verse satirist of his generation in any European language and, as with his progenitors, his bile is the product of injustice and moral outrage.

Old Believers

Three Devout Journalists—By GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

LADLING BUTTER from alternate tubs . . . . A year ago or more Neal Ascherson appeared on a television programme about the monarchy presented by Christopher Hitchens; on the cover of Mr Ascherson's *Games with Shadows*[1] is an elegant puff: "'Bloody good'—Christopher Hitchens". In Alexander Cockburn's *Corruptions of Empire*,[2] a reasonably funny joke is attributed to Christopher Hitchens, "as his admirers may care to know". Christopher Hitchens's *Prepared for the Worst*[3] contains several adulatory references to "my friend Alexander Cockburn", the publication of whose book was marked by a not so much adulatory as hero-worshipping profile of the author by Mr Hitchens, which appeared in that well-known organ of proletarian internationalism, *The Tatler*.

So the authors know one another. They are not a club or a clique, but three unusually gifted and interesting middle-aged British journalists. "Middle-aged" covers more than a decade: Mr Ascherson is 57, Mr Cockburn was born in 1940, and Mr Hitchens early last year wrote an article, also for *The Tatler*, on the anguish of turning 40. Each earns his living as a journalist. All write or have written for the *New Statesman*; Mr Ascherson wrote a weekly column for *The Observer* until the end of 1989, when he moved to another paper (the daily *Independent*); the other two are both in American exile, where they bite the hand. Each has published a collection of newspaper or magazine articles (a kind of book I enjoy). And all have comparable politics. There has been an idea floating about that academic and journalistic hegemony has passed from the collectivist Left. These three show that there is still life in the Left; and they illustrate its limitations.

"British journalists", I wrote; apparently a Scotsman, an Irishman, and an Englishman, as in some bad joke. But things aren't quite as they seem. Scotland is one of the causes to which Mr Ascherson has given his heart. He is fascinated by the Druidic myth of the Ancient British State, and acute about it: the way in which the English cook up a makeshift compromise and call it a tradition. Although he admires A. J. P. Taylor, he would not agree with Mr Taylor's phrase that the British Constitution is "the greatest political work of man"—he has no time for the Union, and would passionately like to see some sort of autonomous government in Scotland. At this point his argument loses its thread, or becomes deliberately vague.

The answer to "the West Lothian Question"—how many Scottish representatives, if any, should stay in the London Parliament if there is a devolved Parliament in Scotland—is "So what?", he says. No, it isn't. The position of Leftist Home-Rulers is hopeless, and mildly dishonest. As James Fenton said in the *New Statesman*, more than ten years ago (when Scottish devolution was last in the air), there is a sense in which *independence* for Scotland is of no concern to the English if a majority of the people of Scotland want it. But Devolution or Home Rule for Scotland is very much a question which affects the English, and in which they have a say. Of course, a separate Scotland will have a permanent government of the Left, and "independent" England—independent of Scotland—will have a permanent government of the Right, as Mr Kinnock is well aware.

So is Mr Ascherson. He wants a socialist Scotland, yet

[1] *Games with Shadows*. By NEAL ASCHERSON. Radius, £18.00; paper £7.95.

[2] *Corruptions of Empire*. By ALEXANDER COCKBURN. Verso, £14.95; paper £7.95.

[3] *Prepared for the Worst*. By CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS. Chatto & Windus, £15.95.

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to abandon England to Thatcherite rule would seem cruel; hence his evasion. He has recently shown some inkling of what has made Mrs Thatcher popular, and even acknowledged that her appeal is not entirely base. All the same, Thatcherism depresses and disgusts him. Perhaps modern England does—to a degree which distorts his vision. He can be unusually clear-sighted and is a wonderful reporter: read him on the small towns of England and why the English have always scorned them, or on what their different styles of Great War memorials say about Germany, France, and England.

And yet, "is" and "ought" struggle fiercely inside him. He writes bitterly about Rupert Murdoch's behaviour at the time of the Wapping putsch and also, in a way some of us will find more than irritating, about the journalists' role then. What was the alternative? "Ought" Ascherson would say that there should have been a gentle revolution by which the new technology would be introduced into Fleet Street with the traditional printing unions playing a constructive role as all marched towards a progressive new dawn. "Is" Ascherson knows perfectly well that that wasn't on offer, that the printers had no intention whatever of cooperating with anyone on any terms but their own, and that in Mr Murdoch the unions got the proprietor they deserved. Perhaps the British as a whole deserve Mr Murdoch. "Ought" Ascherson wouldn't like to think so, but "Is" Ascherson shares the fear (to which he attributes "the awful lack of self-confidence of the intellectual Left") that "those who read the *Sun* really are '*Sun* Readers'"— which is to say, as brutish, bigoted, nasty, and subhumanly stupid as that newspaper. It's a problem, all right; what Alfred Braunthal called the Left's "mystic cult of the Masses, who always feel the right way but always act the wrong way".

ACCORDING to his own description at least, the Irishman is Alexander Cockburn—which is rather odd. To anyone else he appears to be descended from an eminent Scots family, and to have been born and educated in England. His father, the charming and preposterous Claud Cockburn, settled in Ireland for financial reasons. Mr Cockburn writes amusingly and engagingly about his upbringing and about his father, but you can have too much of a good thing, even filial loyalty. Cockburn *fils* has been living in the United States for seventeen years, writing for *The Village Voice*, *The Nation, House & Garden,* and the *Wall Street Journal.* His stock-in-trade is aggressive, spiteful, witty attacks on politicians, and especially on other journalists. His reputation was not born merely from a *succès d'animosité* but because, given the cautious and costive tone of the American press, there was room for a culture critic as lively and clever as this.

But his own aggression makes him vulnerable. To criticise Mr Cockburn as a salon socialist misses the point. The truth is that any journalist of the Left is in an awkward and potentially false position. He can either write the flat ephemeral pamphlet and contribute to sectarian sheets, in which case no one reads him; or he can write for the bourgeois press, in which case he looks like having it both ways. The radical writer needn't sell out to the system, but he ought to remember the ambiguity of his own position when he abuses others. Not long ago, *The Spectator* ran a harmless publicity stunt, selling subscriptions to Poland. Neil Ascherson attacked this in a singularly humourless article. What the Poles needed wasn't trivial upper-class Right-wing tosh like *The Spectator,* he said, but "a paper which covers world news extensively and critically—*The Observer*, for example". As I read this, there came into my mind's eye a wonderful picture of the riveters in the Lenin shipyard poring over another lengthy discussion of the ownership of Harrods.

BUT IT IS Alexander Cockburn who is the master at having it both ways. He writes radical polemics—and publishes them in the *Wall Street Journal.* As Conor Cruise O'Brien has asked, who does he think he's kidding? Even Mr Cockburn must be dimly aware that his career constitutes a testament to the strength and resilience of the existing social and economic order. If the editor of the *WSJ* thought that Cockburn's pieces represented a serious threat to the capitalist system, he wouldn't publish them. Interestingly, though maybe not surprisingly, there is nothing in *Corruptions of Empire* about the episode for which Mr Cockburn is best remembered by some: his departure from *The Village Voice* in the spring of 1984. Mr Cockburn, who is needless to say a militant anti-Zionist, received a grant of $10,000 from the Institute of Arab Studies to write a book about the Levant which he never completed or perhaps never even began. When the transaction became public, he was "suspended indefinitely" from the *Voice*, to the glee of his many enemies.

To be fair (and if you were playing that game of people's least likely sayings, those words would do very well for Alexander Cockburn), he was to some extent a victim; it is at least possible that the same drastic treatment wouldn't have been meted out to a writer who had taken ten Gs from a pro-Israeli group. Yet here also Mr Cockburn had been dextrously, or rather ambidextrously, having it both ways. In his adoptive New York, where the existence of a powerful and sometimes unscrupulous Zionist lobby is no paranoid fantasy, Mr Cockburn could pose as a Daniel in the den; but his spiritual home is the fashionable international Left, and there "anti-Zionism" is part of the club rules. (It is saying a good word for Israel that gets you blackballed nowadays.)

In his valedictory to *The Village Voice*, Mr Cockburn defended his concept of journalism: a newspaper ought to be "a bundle of opinion and prejudice advertised as such. *The New York Times* is a bundle of opinion and prejudice masquerading as 'objective fact'." Elsewhere he expands this. A writer had referred to Claud Cockburn as "a propagandist, a label my father would cordially accept . . .. it is [the author's] quest for the 'truly objective' war correspondent that seems to be vain." And a journalist friend was not one of "those pallidly objective souls who need a route map to get from gas shortage to Exxon headquarters, or who feels incapable of making up his mind 'until all the facts are in' and all the evidence has been judiciously assessed. [He] knew what the facts were going to tell him long before he discovered what they actually were."

That is certainly one way of going about our trade. Fifty

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years ago plenty of ruddy souls needed no route map to tell them that Bukharin and Zinoviev had been conspiring with Trotsky, Hitler, and the Mikado to restore capitalism in Russia. Come to that, Stalin had himself had an extraordinary flair for knowing what the facts were going to tell him. Maybe bourgeois empiricism has its points.

IT IS NOT SO MUCH that Mr Cockburn is silly, though he sometimes is, as that if a writer has "a prose style which relies on hyperbole for such effect as it can command" the result becomes wearisome. Those are the words of Christopher Hitchens, writing all too accurately on Mr Michael Foot; but they might apply equally accurately to his friend Mr Cockburn. Or, for that matter, to himself. There is too much striving for effect in Mr Hitchens's abuse of Reagan's "hangers-on and toadies" or of a writer whose "every important contention in the article is a lie".

Mr Hitchens calms down abroad, is not bad on Central America and Central Europe, better on the Levant. Best of all are his literary essays, and the truth that emerges from his collection is that for all his posturing as a butch revolutionary, he is in truth an old-fashioned pink-cheeked aesthete, the would-be Cyril Connolly of his generation. There are excellent essays on writers with whom Hitchens isn't supposed to be in sympathy. His piece on *Brideshead Revisited* apropos the (as he rightly says) trashy telly-serial is one of the best things written on that book, explaining both the homo-erotic theme and the ever-present memory of the Great War which haunt the novel. He is just as perceptive about *The Jewel in the Crown,* in an article which has the additional effect of exposing in one of his more odiously fraudulent moments another of Mr Hitchens's friends, Mr Salman Rushdie. As it turns out, India has an atavistic interest for both of them. Mr Hitchens at first appears as the Englishman of the trio. He incorrectly says that his grandfather was a "ranker in the Indian Army". He means the British Army in India: Sepoy Hitchens would certainly have been a curiosity.

But the truth is striking enough. Mr Hitchens has a deep interest in Israel from, again needless to say, an anti-Zionist perspective. His final, remarkable essay describes his discovery in his late thirties of his own Jewishness, on his mother's side. It isn't likely that we will find him Standing By Israel as a result, but already some of his youthful enthusiasms look to be fading. There is an unconvincing tribute to Marx on the 100th anniversary of his death, trotting out the usual excuses for Marx's errancy in prediction.

To see writers like Mr Hitchens go through this routine is reminiscent of no one so much as the elder Gosse. Edmund Gosse's father was a Christian fundamentalist of peculiarly dogmatic kind, a Plymouth Brother, but he was also an able marine biologist. Faith and Scripture taught him the date of the Creation; it was predated (observation and reason told him) by the fossils he examined. His reconciliation of the two was ingenious. The fossils, Gosse decided, had been placed there by the Creator to lure fallen mortals into scepticism: a deliberate trap which must be resisted. Perhaps Marx likewise predicted the continuing immiseration of the proletariat, leading inexorably to socialist revolution, in order to test the faith of his followers.

Faith is not the wrong word. At one point or another, each of these three writers refers to his agnosticism; Mr Hitchens is "a white Anglo-Celtic atheist", or thought he was. But in fact they are all Old Believers, confessing to the great proselytising religion of the 20th century, Socialism. Mr Hitchens is maybe a little hesitant: he actually judges writers on merit, and not on doctrinal soundness. Mr Cockburn is the most impenitent, to a comical degree. There is such a thing as parodic anti-Communism, but in Mr Cockburn we see parodic anti-anti-Communism. He is as reluctant to say a bad word against those whom his father served as Lady Mosley is to criticise her own old friends. The trouble with progressives, Mr Cockburn says, "is that they always panic at the sight of the Red-baiters' paintbrush". Not he, of sterner stuff; never apologise, never explain. (When will the Left grow up and *stop* feeling they have to make excuses for the Zhdanovs and Berias?).

Do I exaggerate? Mr Cockburn's least amiable trait is an affectation of brutality. The Germans east of the Elbe were raped and brutalised by the Red Army in 1945. "What did they expect, goodwill visits from the Bolshoi?" Afghanistan is "An unspeakable country, filled with unspeakable people, sheepshaggers and smugglers . . . if ever a country deserved rape it's Afghanistan" (this in 1980, but not included in the present anthology). When he finds it necessary to utter the faintest, strangulated criticism of Soviet policy, he is even funnier. "You can say that the Russians were wrong to have shot down the South Korean jumbo jet and killed 269 snoozing passengers . . . ." Oh, I don't know. "Obviously it's not to the Russians' credit that they shot 007 down." Steady on, old chap. You would never have guessed, by the way, that the conjunctive following "passengers" is "but".

It is almost possible to feel some sympathy for Mr Cockburn's predicament. He really has chosen the wrong moment in history for this display of brazenness. Recently he has been involved in controversy with those whom he portrays as reactionary scholars, arguing that Stalin's crimes have been much exaggerated. (I do not misrepresent him.) But no sooner does Mr Cockburn insist once more that Uncle Joe was not as bad as he's been painted, than yet another Soviet historian comes along with a new figure, revised upwards by some millions, for the victims of purge and famine. There was a (no doubt mythical) New York liberal who insisted that he would not believe in Alger Hiss's guilt even if Hiss confessed to it. Is Mr Cockburn going to find himself still denying the truth as Mr Gorbachov finally confirms it?

MOST INTERESTING OF ALL in terms of Justification by Faith is Mr Ascherson. He too is among the godless (though that did not stop the Kirk asking him to address its colloquy on Devolution). More than that: "Ought" Ascherson yearns for East Europe to come to terms with socialism, but "Is" Ascherson can see things for himself. He understands what is happening in Central Europe in general and Poland in particular. The conflict is agonising. A *Manchester Guardian*

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leader once (according to Malcolm Muggeridge's perhaps *ben trovato* recollection) said that "One is sometimes tempted to believe that the Greeks do not really want a stable government". Neal Ascherson is sometimes tempted to believe that the Poles do not really want socialism. Actually, he knows perfectly well that after 50 years of one species or another, the Poles simply detest socialism and are prepared to try almost anything in its place.

Mr Ascherson frets over the "disconcerting affection for the New Right in the East", which is confirmed by anyone who visits Poland and Hungary. Disconcerting, maybe, but is it surprising? And is Mr Ascherson really the person to complain? The most pernicious lie of the century is "either-or": there was no middle path between Hitler and Stalin, so if you rejected one you must support the other; Franco or the Spanish Communists; New Right or Old Left. Mr Ascherson isn't a Communist (whatever that means nowadays) or a fellow-traveller. But his disdain for liberal democracy means that he is really in no position to reproach the young Poles for their fascination with Hayek or Friedman.

The fact is that this acutely intelligent man, with a wide range of human sympathies, simply cannot grasp the liberal idea. "Ought" Neal still lives in the old socialist kingdom of determinism and individual irresponsibility. "How free in the labour market is a 45-year-old welder living in a council flat at Gateshead who has just been made redundant at Swan Hunter? How free is a smoked haddock? . . ." The plain answer is that the man is free. He could leave his council house, on his bike or by bus, and come to London where there is no unemployment but a labour shortage, from the Underground to *The Observer*, where there must be columns going at present. Mr Ascherson's comparison is insulting to welder and fish alike.

And so Mr Cockburn isn't the only one whose timing is unfortunate. These books appear at the most exhilarating moment in European history since the death of Hitler. What is happening from Berlin to Prague to Budapest to Sofia is not a temporary spasm or a mere episode in political history; it is a great watershed. We all know that we are witnessing the death of collective socialism. *We* know that, but do these three authors? The critical word is "know". A century and a half ago you could witness the anguished writhings of those whose intellectual belief in traditional revealed religion was shaken, but who could not shed its thrall emotionally. It must have been a painful, a disturbing, and often a moving spectacle. It still is.

No Need for Tigritude

The Holy Anger of Wole Soyinka—By I. S. Gillespie

Early travellers to West Coast Africa frequently remarked upon the number of souls per person enjoyed by the inhabitants. It was the agreed goal of missionaries to reduce these to a modest and manageable spiritual demography, at a period when secularisation at home was opening up the possibility of psychic multiplicity, at least in the field of medicine. Freud's stratified soul-system of super-ego, ego, and id, and Jung's amina/animus dichotomy were being digested without noticeable difficulty, although "multiple personalities" were suspected of being in need of therapy. Stateside, there was a brief vogue for the normalisation of schizophrenia, largely within the adolescent rich, but this has been displaced by a rebounding missionary fundamentalism.

However, there remain sound reasons to view Third World intellectuals according to the multipsychic system of their forefathers. Spiritual shrinkage facilitates the work of biographers but is difficult to apply to a generation whose parents retain animist memories, who have been educated in the traditions of a colonial culture and subsequently bombarded by ideologies which deny any psychic existence to political man. An attempt to see "the African soul" as single and indivisible is surely misleading, particularly when approaching so complex an artist as the Yoruba dramatist Wole Soyinka. Soyinka's soul-map is complicated by historical accidents not of his choosing. At least two if not three of his souls are "white" (a diagnosis for which he will not thank me). Another is approximately Japanese, and one clearly feminine in the Jungian tradition. Then there is the child-soul, or "genius"—which Westerners lost when they discarded Roman paganism. Also it is difficult to deny to Soyinka the not purely human "spirit of place"—perhaps related to the traditional "bush-soul". An ancestral soul he would certainly claim, though this is confusingly futurist. But these must be dealt with in greater detail.

Olowole Akinwande Soyinka was born in 1934 in Ijebu Isara, in the "Western Zone" of the massive composite of kingdoms given the name "Nigeria" as recently as 1914. As the child of a mission-school household, of which his father was supervisor, he could in no way escape a white Protestant soul with the attendant blessings of sanctimony and meritocracy, weapons more effective against their importers than malaria. Soyinka's early environment bore the unmistakable stamp of the Victorian eccentric, Mary Slessor, who filled her bed with orphans snatched from infanticide but saw the

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wearing of shoes as a trifle uppity in her congregation, since she was ignorant of their protection against the devastations of hook-worm. Slessor's rescued girl-babies became her servants, but her adopted boys were set on the social ladder to the ministry, via a rigid work-ethic which was to become an obsessional component of "the wind of change". Expatriate teachers during the pre-independence years were startled by the need to lock school-children in their dormitories to prevent their burning the midnight oil in the class-room.

Literacy, however, was not solely a meritocratic tool. It was an explosive joy to a culture embarrassed by the wealth of oral tradition, from proverbial wisdom and bardic praise-song to the virtuosity of "the talking drum". But the work-ethic has no truck with hot-housing: the child-prodigy is as unwelcome as the dunce. Young Soyinka, offending both tribal conformity and mission humility, resembled too closely the biblical Joseph among his brethren, and paid the price of organised family rituals of "put-down". His response was not the intended self-criticism. Instead he summoned the other great missionary import—righteous indignation. Elevated to the level of holy anger, this remained with him, not only as sanctimoniousness, but also as the furious sense of honour of a Samurai warrior.

More immediately, the boy's superlative intelligence promoted him to the academic environment which became the matrix of his second white soul—that of the classical Athenian. The international school in Ibadan, based upon Gordonstoun, was followed by an English Honours degree at Leeds University, supplying en route the respectable archaism he sought for his Yoruba pantheon, while leaving untouched the more accurate and rambunctious Norse parallels. But emerging within the atmosphere of student dramatics was the Soyinka best known to the West—the Nigerian Bernard Shaw. However Irish this soul, it also ties closely to the traditions of an ancestral trickster-god, a mischievous shaman typical of pre-literate society.

In his early work, beginning with *The Trials of Brother Jero*, the eponymous religious con-artist "Jero" is immediately accessible and everywhere familiar. To place him in West Africa makes him both missionary and native doctor, but he would be equally at home on Hyde Park Corner or Blackpool beach. He calls himself "Immaculate Jero, Articulate Hero of Christ's Crusade", and most of his adventures involve evasion of payment for the white robes which make him immaculate. Curiously, the performance of these lightweight comedies is prohibited in Soyinka's own country, along with his later more sensitive works. He may have taken to heart Shaw's doctrine that one can insult an audience indefinitely so long as one makes it laugh, but there is always something in his humour that disconcertingly chokes back the laughter. Soyinka was shortly to learn that there were safer targets for his wit than his fellow-country-

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men. Critics have described him as "a good hater" with "an effortless command of rudeness"; but the exercise of Shavian impudence requires a complacent public, secure in its established manners, able to welcome bitter satire as the clowning of a court fool.

IT WAS A MISTAKE to expect a satirist's privilege on his return to Africa. Certainly, the precarious régime of Yakubu Gowon was not ready to accommodate this democratic luxury. Soyinka's coat of many colours was rent, and he was incarcerated by his kin. It would be unkind to suggest that his political wings were clipped by this ordeal. Most deeply offended was his warrior's dignity, giving special meaning to the word "man" in his prison memoirs. Such rhetoric as "The man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny" and "In any people that submit willingly to the daily humiliation of fear, the man dies" were less relevant to the human condition than to traditions of failed initiation. And hatred was seen as the prerequisite of this manhood.

Since by nature Soyinka was unable to keep silent under any conditions, he was faced with the option of lampooning his immediate enemies in terms poetically opaque, or deflecting his anger on to the now anachronistic hate-object of the white colonial. In the manner of religious virtuosi confronted by indigestible modernity (in his case seen as cultural rape), Soyinka also set to work to recreate his ancestral gods after his own image, by now elegant and professorial. The child Joseph's descent into Egypt was transposed—*à la* Thomas Mann—into Orpheus's descent to the underworld. The last squeak out of "this dreamer" is heard in a nightmarish and esoteric little drama, *Madmen and Specialists*, a Black *Götterdämmerung*, beginning with fatalistic African Norns who have unwisely bestowed on mankind the knowledge of good and evil, and ending with their taking back their gifts in a grand conflagration. Soyinka's prison experiences are mimed and hinted at by the "madmen", and the "Specialist" is the now familiar Third World military version.

Another descent into hell takes place in a brilliant but not wholly successful novel, *Season of Anomy*, where the hero pursues his Eurydice into the underside of Nigerian politics. Typically, Soyinka's dialogue is superb, but his characterisation is stagey and the whole lacks the narrative flow of fiction. It is perhaps best envisaged as a vivid film scenario.

DURING HIS PRIME, Soyinka's return to his old gods took two forms. One was a staid academic analysis of his recreated (Athenian-style) Yoruba pantheon. The other was his near-masterpiece, *Death and the King's Horseman*, which deserves the respectful attention of the widest public (but also possibly needs rescue by rewriting on the part of the author).

In this drama, Soyinka has not yet legitimised his revivalism in the safer strategy of misty archaism, but concentrates upon an historical event within living memory, though not within Soyinka's adult memory. It involves the failed ritual suicide of a tribal henchman who should traditionally have followed his chieftain to the grave, but is prevented by the twin circumstances of his love of life and the intervention of the colonial authority. An almost operatic work, it demonstrates Soyinka's fine musical and poetic flair as well as his dramatic powers at their peak. It is intended to be taken seriously as the aborting of quasi-godhead—as cataclysmic as if Pontius Pilate had sabotaged history by awarding a suspended sentence to Jesus Christ; or, if that is too extreme a view, as if Octavian Caesar had arrived in time to apply a snakebite serum to Cleopatra. If not actual divinity, at least the achievement of African manhood in its mature dignity had been prevented by insensitive paternalism.

The success of this work depends upon its convincing on three levels: religious, historical, and aesthetic. On the first, one has to accept the validity of a traditional attitude to immortality such as persuaded Yukio Mishima to join his ancestors in 1970. On the second level, one must close one's eyes to an institution frequently involving the kidnapping of children, whose decapitated heads were required for the funerals of local officials (a commonly reported crime in Nigerian newspapers since Independence, indicating a less than voluntary ritual participation in the death of kings). Even a firm belief in reincarnation would leave one with the feeling that such practices are not precisely at the level of high morality which Soyinka is claiming, but belong to a distinct, though world-wide, category of pragmatic, non-ethical ritual.

It is on the third level—of dramatic achievement—that *Death and the King's Horseman* stands or falls. Here, as ever, Soyinka's cleverness is the enemy of his genius. His inability to resist lampooning "the comic white man"—the colonial officer who rescues "the horseman" from self-immolation—undermines the coherence of true tragedy. There are moments when the purely African section of the play achieves Shakespearean grandeur, but Shakespeare knew better than to make Iago a fool or, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, present Octavian as a clown; and a comic Pontius Pilate does not bear scrutiny. At best, one can only deplore the accomplishment which *Death and the King's Horseman* might have been.

It was not on these issues, however, that Soyinka's near-masterpiece was criticised by his countrymen. They complained that it offended Marxist principles, and that any religious practices open up a softened populace to imperialist exploitation, etc. Soyinka had to work hard on his revivalism to make it acceptable to such an intelligentsia.

Perhaps Soyinka's initial mistake in his elegant mythic exegesis *The Fourth Stage* is to have viewed Greek religion partly through the eyes of Nietzsche—an angry man after his own heart, but also a Northerner to whom Apollo, as emblematic of the sun, represented a temperate and orderly creativity. Indigenous Greeks knew the sun-god as menacing, famine- and disease-bearing; and tropical man was more likely to see the sun in the manner of Chinua Achebe's marvellous hymn in *Anthills of the Savannah*—"Wide-eyed insomniac . . . spitting malediction at a beaten recumbent world. . . ." But the music-dramatist Soyinka needed Nietzsche's Hellenism in connection with his tragedian's craft, ignoring the fact that *The Birth of Tragedy* was dependent

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upon Richard Wagner, with whom he had so much more in common, but from whom he was debarred by unexplored prejudice.

Soyinka reconstructed the Yoruba Obatala as parallel (but superior) to the Nietzschean Apollo, though this meant discarding the subliminal feminine in that deity, whose "sculpture" was the formation of the foetus in the womb. But politically he elevated above him his chosen representative of Dionysus: Ogun. If Obatala, the calm concealed goddess, evokes (Nietzschean) Athens, Ogun might be the emblem of the *Familie* Krupp. Like the Norse Siegfried, he is one of the few smith-gods to obtain full heroic standing, both welding and wielding the sword.

With typical audacity, Soyinka endows Ogun with "a totality of the Dionysian, Apollonian and Promethian virtues"—a mighty claim for an iron-age warrior god. Dionysian "virtues" in a martial cult have been at best (or worst) approached by the Odin-inspired furor of the *Berserkr,* associated with the hallucinatory *amanita muscarii*. Soyinka's "god-intoxication" is closer to his Protestant ethic, masculine but chaste. Ogun is neither mad nor priapic: his virility is inorganic and technological; his "chthonic essence" has solely to do with mining. And since it was essential to the cause to elevate this modest deity to modern mega-racial dimensions, Soyinka named him "Ogun Abibiman", and appointed the amaZulu King Shaka to his retinue. Ogun has joined the multitudinous gods of Jingoism. In earlier days, wearing his coat of many colours, Soyinka had dismissed "negritude" on the splendid grounds that "A tiger has no need for tigritude". Was his tiger-soul to be exorcised by what some of his compatriots call "the tropes of disalienation"?

Continuous psychic fracture fortunately left several areas untouched. Soyinka's anima-soul is blessed by a benign universality. Goddesses may be missing from his pantheon, confirming its sterility; but human women are given great voice. The cult of "the King's Horseman" is most convincingly represented by its priestess—in the guise of a market-woman. The ultimate power in *Madmen and Specialists* is in the hands of old hags—clearly more than they seem. The heroine of *Season of Anomy* is Life itself.

It is unclear at what stage the mellowing took place which enabled Soyinka to write his autobiographical *Aké, the Years of Childhood*, in which anima and genius collaborate to produce one of the loveliest examples of its genre. Soyinka's child-soul has survived assault. The spirit of place in which it was embedded is that of the entrancing Yorubaland of the inter-War years; and if the book ends in a riot, it is one of the unique Nigerian women's rebellions, in this case witnessed by the author and enabling him to illuminate incomparably the feminine environment of his youth. The deep compassion with which Soyinka describes the terrible weariness of women-traders carrying their farm-produce 40 miles on foot from his grandfather's village to the market of his home-town; his lively appreciation of majestic local beauties; and above all, his portrait of "the Wild Christian" who is his mother: all these are more demonstrative of Soyinka's profound humanism than his professed politics.

Somehow, Soyinka has evolved into a Yoruba Hans Sachs, seeing history at last as "a recurrent cycle of stupidities". His last Jero-style comedy, *Requiem for a Futurologist*, appears to suggest that all the people *can* be fooled all of the time, so long as they are told what they wish to hear. It is to be hoped that this is not his swan-song. But his ironic mask has by no means slipped. He may be seen in a photograph of 1986, accepting the Nobel Prize from the comic white men, and quite recognisably wearing the face of Albert Einstein.

Remembering Marienbad

No morning tea with Goethe now,
that book, with marker at the open page,
resounding with his talk to Eckermann.

Foregone this converse with an ageing sage,
this seemly master who'd endured the strife
(but hid the hurt save in the poem's shape)
throughout a heart-torn outward-ordered life.

Knowing the riot in our nerves and veins,
I, too, would emulate, would share his grace,
and cultivate the alleviating present
vouchsafed us for so limited a space.

Set down the tray, then. Goethe shall preside.
Take up his thoughts' quiet train. At sixty-five
surely a man has leisure to be wise:

but here am I returned from Marienbad—
abject, and stunned, with late love's last surprise.

Derek Stanford

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Books Encountered

Writers' France: A Regional Panorama. By JOHN ARDAGH. Hamish Hamilton, £18.00.

Delightful holiday reading for Francophile bookworms: a survey of ten great regions with notes on French (and a few other) authors associated with them. Ardagh has travelled the roads and read the books. His photographer Mayotte Magnus is a bit unatmospheric; but the text is sharp, evocative, and surprisingly tart.

How Old Are You? Age Consciousness in American Culture. By HOWARD P. CHUDACOFF. Princeton University Press, $19.95, £12.50.

The author, Professor of History at Brown University, argues learnedly and wittily that age grading has pervaded US society for 100 years, but concludes that tinkering with or removing it could "create thorny problems". He quotes Maurice Chevalier on being old: "It's not bad when you consider the alternative."

Small Craft Advisories: Critical Articles 1984-1988. By ROBERT CRAFT. Thames and Hudson, £12.95.

The conductor and Stravinsky collaborator has a pen to match his baton. The pieces collected here include many from *The New York Review of Books*, and cover music (tough on *Amadeus*), poetry (discerning on Auden), painting (crisp on Lord Clark), books (indulgent on Paul Scott), and ballet (charming on Lopokova, Lady Keynes).

Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age. By MODRIS EKSTEINS. Bantam Press, £14.95.

The Professor of History at Scarborough College, University of Toronto, a German specialist, offers a vividly readable essay in a newish genre, politico-literary-artistic-sociological-historical. The subtitle is too limited: this brilliant book carries modernism as far as the *Führerbunker* in 1945.

The Faber Book of Fevers and Frets. Edited by D. J. ENRIGHT. Faber, £12.99.

"Exercise is bunk. If you are healthy, you don't need it: if you are sick, you shouldn't take it." Just one of innumerable gems in this dazzling anthology of quacks, malingerers, nut cases, new diseases, nasty ones, nauseating remedies, and scabrous anecdotes. The quote is "attributed" to Henry Ford; but I wonder.

Questions of Broadcasting. By STUART HOOD and GARRET O'LEARY. Methuen, £14.99.

Some accountant must have wanted the extra four pence per book. In fact it's a sort of radio programme, with tape-recorded inserts on, first, the history of UK broadcasting, and then concerns about the future. Those interested will know the first; and no one knows the second. But the witnesses are worthwhile.

The Awakening of the Soviet Union. By GEOFFREY HOSKING. Heinemann, £13.95.

Probably the best and certainly the most concisely packed of recent kindred studies, based on the 1988 Reith Lectures. Professor Hosking makes the key point that the Central Committee plenum of September 1989 disappointed the USSR's nations because the federation it envisaged was to be centrally imposed, not jointly formed.

The End of Nature. By BILL MCKIBBEN. Viking, £12.99.

Another accountants' price: but a stunning book, substantiating with eloquence and scholarship the sense we already have that on earth there's no more wilderness and only the wildlife we permit. The word "explorer" is archaic; "getting away from it all" at best means a vacation in some National Park; Saki's "Mappined life" is here.

Guerrillas in Uniform: Churchill's Private Armies in the Middle East and the War Against Japan 1940-1945. By ERIC MORRIS. Hutchinson, £16.95.

Exhilarating but professional and judicious account of such quasi-privateers as Vladimir Peniakoff ("Popski"), Robert Laycock, Paddy Mayne, David Stirling, Orde Wingate, *et al.* The author teaches at Sandhurst, and dispels some myths about the role of the special forces then; but he sees their value now and their valour always.

Dust in a Dark Continent. By ROBIN PAGE. The Claridge Press, £16.95.

Page was sacked from the UK Civil Service for writing articles on social security abuse—a breach of the Official Secrets Act. He's just as frank and personal about Africa: the house which commissioned the book rejected it as "too political"—no doubt meaning refreshingly heterodox in not always praising black régimes and *vice versa*. A chatty, rambling read.

Poems 1955-1959 and An Essay in Autobiography. By BORIS PASTERNAK. Collins Harvill, £6.95.

Timely reissue of two excellent translations, by Michael and Manya Harari respectively, first published in 1959 and 1960. The poems are also printed in the original Russian. The book should obviously be read with . . .

Boris Pasternak: The Tragic Years 1930-1960. By EVGENY PASTERNAK. Collins Harvill, £15.00.

Pasternak's son here tells from inside what earlier came from news reports: opposition in the 1930s, support for Akhmatova, and the fury and furore over *Dr Zhivago*. Michael Duncan's translation of the prose reads fluently; the poems, translated by Ann Pasternak Slater and Craig Raine, are a further delight.

The State of the Language: 1990 Edition. Edited by CHRISTOPHER RICKS and LEONARD MICHAELS. Faber, £17.50.

Huge, disorderly, stimulating ragbag of essays, some funny, some hurt, some pedantic, some infuriating, divided into "Englishes", Politics, Money, Art, practice, and prescription. The liveliest article is on the lingo of *Variety*, which has left far more traces than you would think: *vamp, payoff, hick, whodunit* . . . .

Sons of the Moon: A Journey in the Andes. By HENRY SHUKMAN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

Slim, distilled, perceptive, curiously cool account of travels in the Altiplano of the Bolivian Andes, where this bright young scholar and musicologist found remnants of the ancient Aymara people, survivors from pre-Columbian, pre-Inca ages. But the trouble with travel books is the traveller's loneliness.

Shakespeare's Roman Worlds. By VIVIAN THOMAS. Routledge, £30.00.

Wonderfully vivid and convincing account of how vivid and convincing was Shakespeare's Rome—a real political stage, with complex, conflicting personalities, solid movements, and moral convictions about "service to the state, constancy, fortitude, valour, friendship, love of family, and respect for the gods".

Love's Executioner and other Tales of Psychotherapy. By IRVIN D. YALOM. Bloomsbury, £14.95.

Heavily disguised accounts of ten analyses, not all successful, with dialogue often fictional. Dr Yalom says only patients will recognise themselves: but even that seems near the knuckle—a case of Sacks-and-violence, as it were. So, though deeply engrossed, one feels one's enjoyment was for all the wrong reasons.

R.M.

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INTERVIEW

Can Colonial Revolt Dismantle the Empire?

MARJU LAURISTIN with GEORGE URBAN on the Baltic Defection

GEORGE URBAN: *Empires have colonies and colonies have colonial populations with colonial wounds and colonial inhibitions. So runs the conventional wisdom. Do you, as an Estonian Deputy of the Supreme Soviet, feel that you represent a nation that has been colonised in the sense in which Tanganyika was a colony under British rule or Indo-China under French?*

MARJU LAURISTIN: The simple answer would be to say yes, but that would not do justice to the implications of your question. The Estonian people do not have "a colonial mentality". They do not feel themselves to be inferior to the metropolitan power, nor do they feel that they ought to ape the culture or the manners of Russia. Yet they have been over-run and colonised. Their status is that of an occupied land which has in no way recognised the legitimacy or permanence of occupation.

The Estonians have a deep attachment to their country which political and economic colonisation has done nothing to destroy. Their numerical preponderance may have been reduced as a result of aggressive Russian immigration, but not their will to keep their national identity intact. Those of us who are Deputies in the People's Congress or the Supreme Soviet conceive our role to be that of fighters for our nation; we are soldiers in the front line protecting our interests *vis-à-vis* the Soviet colonial system.

—What about the comparison with the old-fashioned colonies of the maritime powers? I would have thought the principal difference was this—that the British, for example, did not foist their social system on the Indians or Burmese but ruled through the existing and accepted local hierarchies. Soviet colonialism, on the other hand, is totalitarian and therefore far more destructive of national life and traditions.

MARJU LAURISTIN: That is so, but there's another factor that makes us into "uncolonial colonies". Already under the Czars, it was a well-recognised feature of the Russian Empire that some of the territories on the peripheries were more highly developed than the heartland of Russia. Today, this is even more true. Twenty years of independence between the two World Wars saw our country make extraordinary leaps in industry, commerce, and culture. Our Estonian infrastructure was on a par with some of the Scandinavian countries and our living standards were not far behind. Today, although all these standards have fallen way behind those of Scandinavia, they are still very much ahead

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Born in 1940 in Tallinn, she trained as a sociologist and is now Professor of Journalism and chairs the Department of Journalism at Tartu University. In the 1970s she was one of the founders of the first Soviet Institute of Sociology (such organisations had previously been banned: sociology was deemed to be a non-subject since all social problems could be solved by Marxism-Leninism). However, it was forcibly closed down as anti-Soviet.

Her father, Johannes Lauristin, an old-time Party member, spent sixteen years in jail for taking part in an attempted Communist coup in Estonia in 1924; in 1940 he was instrumental in the brutal Communist take-over in that country following the Mototov-Ribbentrop Pact. His daughter, on 15 December last year, helped to launch the Estonian Social-Democratic-Independence Party, whose programme includes independence for Estonia. This interview took place in October 1989.

George Urban's contributions to ENCOUNTER *include conversations with Hugh Trevor-Roper (December 1989), Milovan Djilas (September/October and November 1988), Vladimir Bukovsky (November 1987, January 1988), Alain Besançon (May and June 1987), Galina Vishnevskaya (December 1986, January 1987), Max M. Kampelman (February 1985), Alexander Zinoviev (April 1984), Jeane Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Rostow (April 1983), and Daniel Bell (February 1983). "Can the Soviet System Survive Reform?", a collection of these conversations, was published in May 1989 by Pinter Publishers in London and New York.*

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of the standards of Central Russia or the Ukraine. To put it another way: the Soviet colonial system is one in which, paradoxically, some of the colonies live better and are generally more advanced than the colonial power. In many ways, the "centre" of the Soviet Empire is in the Baltic states, not in Russia.

—And that, I suppose, helps to explain why the Russians experience great difficulty in keeping the Empire together. In the British and French Empires, the colonial tribes and nations had a good deal of admiration for the technological accomplishments and the political and cultural institutions of the white man, even though they resented and often fought his rule. Even today, being part of "the British Commonwealth" is thought of as being a member of a very desirable club, and the now independent former colonies do not feel it to be demeaning to use English or French as their "inter-ethnic" language; some of them are, indeed, proud of it. This would not be the case with the Estonian-Russian relationship. I doubt whether Latvians, Lithuanians, or Estonians would look up to Soviet or Russian political culture, or to Soviet or Russian civic institutions, as things worthy of admiration, much less of emulation.

MARJU LAURISTIN: Well, the old maritime empires had their colonies overseas; in Ceylon or Nigeria you didn't find millions of Englishmen installing themselves as permanent residents and crowding out the natives. In the Soviet Union some 60 million Russians live outside the Soviet Russian Republic, many of them in the Baltic countries. The sheer weight of that immigration has increased the pain of our colonial status.

On the question of metropolitan "superiority", attitudes in the Soviet empire vary. In the backward colonies such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, and Kirgizistan, the population has a certain respect for Russian civilisation because that has been the mediator of Western science and technology. The Baltic countries, however, had and still have no reason to share that respect. Even under the Czars, we withdrew from the impact of Russian civilisation. We felt we belonged, rather, to the North European cultural belt of Germany and Scandinavia; and we still do. For all these reasons our image of ourselves is not that of a colonised people. We are an occupied people. We are prisoners of the Soviet system, which is not quite the same thing as saying that we are colonials.

—Are you surprised to see that the early Communist dream—that under "advanced socialism" social homogeneity would increase and the central importance of "nations" would decrease and then vanish—has come to nothing?

MARJU LAURISTIN: That abstract expectation had its roots in the Enlightenment and was pleasing to the minds of theoreticians. They believed that quarrelsome nations were class-conditioned, negative phenomena which would be absorbed in the melting pot of Communism. They did not recognise national identity and national rights as human qualities projected on to a larger canvas. But that is what they are, and that is why we are fighting for them. Communist theory got it all wrong.

—Talking to Russian people, in Russia or in Estonia, do you find that they realise that they are looked upon by the Estonians as "Occupiers" and are disliked accordingly?

MARJU LAURISTIN: The intellectual segment of the Russian population (which is, of course, only a very small segment of the whole) realises, and in fact realised long before the arrival of *perestroika*, that the Baltic states are under occupation. Mind you, they don't think of themselves as occupiers, but they do feel they are part of the system and of the nation which occupies us; and they are deeply ashamed.

The attitude of the run-of-the-mill Russian is quite different. The Russians we have in the three Baltic Republics are astonished and angry when they see themselves portrayed on our posters and mentioned in our speeches as "Occupiers". They have been brought up on an untrue version of history and cannot understand why we see them as we do. They have been taught to believe that they entered the Baltic countries as liberators, that they brought prosperity and fraternity to our workers, that they gave us a superior form of culture and higher living standards . . . and now we are repaying them with rank ingratitude.

—Five years into Gorbachov's stewardship, isn't it a little difficult to see how the Russian people can still believe all that? One thing Gorbachov's "Glasnost" has done is to fill in some of the "blank spots" of Soviet history.

MARJU LAURISTIN: Two things come together in the Russian psyche: the strength of Stalinist propaganda, which cannot be erased in a matter of a few years; and the needs of psychological self-protection, which leads the Baltic Russians to rationalise their decision to stay where they are. That rationalisation takes the form of denying the truth about the colonial status of the Baltic countries. If the Stalinist version of Baltic history is the truth, then they have nothing to be ashamed of and the present Baltic agitation for sovereignty and independence can be dismissed as hostile, indeed as "fascist propaganda". That is their reasoning.

IF THE man-in-the-street in Russia believes himself to be a liberator, how does he explain why so many of the liberated are now rebelling against the rule of Moscow? Can he not see that, with the Stalinist constraints half removed, virtually every nation and nationality wants to be rid of the liberator's tutelage?

MARJU LAURISTIN: The Russian people are under great pressure. There is little food in the shops; consumer durables are hard to come by; the lines grow longer, and dissatisfaction is on the increase. Their one concern is that *perestroika* should fill the empty shelves. Their horizons do not reach beyond housing and the shopping-basket. The problems that exercise us appear to the Russians to be frivolous and, more than that, subversive. For us, *perestroika* is, in the first

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place, a question of national consciousness and national sovereignty, because it is in these areas that we have suffered the greatest injustices and "restructuring" is most urgently needed.

IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE *the image of selfless "Soviet Man" sacrificing blood and treasure for the liberation of Czechs, Hungarians, and Poles is the subject of much derision. From what you have just said, however, it seems that the Russian people genuinely believe what Soviet propaganda has dinned into them since the War. . . .*

MARJU LAURISTIN: They have been told that they were not only liberators but martyrs; that line of propaganda has found wide acceptance. They will tell anyone ready to listen to them that their present poverty and backwardness are directly due to the sacrifices they made for the good of other nations, and they are genuinely upset to see that these nations, far from being thankful, repay them with suspicion and hatred. I could quote many examples.

Travelling from Moscow to Tallinn by train the other day, I shared a compartment with some Russians. When they heard me speak Estonian to my husband, some of them started up a conversation on the topic of ingratitude. "Why is it", they asked, "that the Estonians are so ungrateful? We have given them economic assistance, we have developed their culture, we have sent them our workers, and yet they want to push us out of Estonia and want to leave the Union." Similar sentiments are voiced by the "Interfront"[1] day in, day out.

—A certain missionary mentality is deeply engrained in Russian history and culture. Is the present display of incomprehension a latter-day manifestation of the "misunderstood Orthodox missionary", the Slavophile thwarted by Westernisers?

MARJU LAURISTIN: It's a mixture of that and of Stalinism. Stalin was very good at harnessing old Russian likes and dislikes to his ideology. The notion that the world was waiting for Soviet-Russian Man to set it free is an old Russian conceit, though it now parades under a Soviet name-tag. That the ordinary Russian cannot comprehend the true state of affairs in his country creates an extemely dangerous situation.

—When you suggest to a Russian that many nations and nationalities look upon the USSR as "an Empire", does he know what you are talking about?

MARJU LAURISTIN: Yes, he does. Some of the intellectual sections of the population would certainly agree that the Soviet Union is an Empire—they themselves constantly harp on the theme of "Soviet colonialism"—but the ordinary Russian would be offended. I remember the frenzied manner in which the People's Congress behaved on 2 June 1989, when Andrei Sakharov raised his complaint about the activities of the Soviet Air Force in Afghanistan. There was uproar in the Chamber when he observed that the Soviet invasion had been "a war of annihilation, a terrible sin. . . ." He was shouted down and had to retreat without finishing his speech. He was followed by a disabled veteran of the campaign, who shouted words to the effect that he was proud of his country's record in Afghanistan. "The USSR", he said significantly, "was the imperial homeland of Communism."

This sparked off wild cheering by the majority of Deputies; everyone stood up and applauded.

—Gorbachov included?

MARJU LAURISTIN: Gorbachov included, but he was already standing when the majority rose to their feet; in any case, he, too, joined the applause. We alone—representatives of the Baltic states and democratic deputies from Moscow, the Ukraine, Armenia, and so on—remained sitting. We were in a minority; the majority were looking at us daggers drawn. I felt I was in a hostile mob—it was terrifying. . . . We should remember that phrase about "*the imperial homeland of Communism*". It answers your question whether the ordinary Russian realises that his country is "an Empire".

—Did you feel that the Deputies' hostility might, under certain conditions, translate into a possibly violent suppression of the rights and demands of the national Republics?

MARJU LAURISTIN: Oh, yes, I did—it could be turned against the Armenians, the Azeris and Georgians just as readily as against us. I witnessed some frightening scenes at recent meetings in Moscow. I vividly remember, at the height of the first crisis of Nagorno-Karabakh,[2] a young Armenian giving moving details of the plight of his countrymen and pleading for sovereignty and self-government. Well, the Russian people listening to him didn't like it. "Stop him!" they bellowed. "Who gave him the right to speak?" "Down with him", they demanded.

The mood of these people was not far removed from that of a lynch-mob. It encapsulated for me the ordinary Russian citizen's attitude to all demands for national independence. This is something to be watched very closely, because Russian xenophobia is in league with certain half-dormant fascist sentiments.

—Dr Otto von Habsburg, a distinguished student of the Eastern scene, observed to me recently (July 1989) that one of the consequences of the demise of Soviet society may be the rise, through "Pamyat",[3] of a form of Nazism.

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[1] "Interfront" is an organisation of Russians resident in the Baltic Republics. It is thought to be directed from Moscow, as a counter to the separatist activities of the Baltic People's Fronts.

[2] Nagorno-Karabakh, an autonomous predominantly Armenian enclave within the Republic of Azerbaijan, is the ancient home of Armenian culture. Its ambition to join the neighbouring Republic of Armenia has caused a series of profound crises in Trans-Caucasia, which remain unresolved.

[3] *Pamyat* (Memory) is an unofficial organisation for the preservation of the Russian national heritage, best known in the West for the activities of one of its wings, which is dedicated to xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and the de-Christianisation of Russian culture. See Walter Laqueur, "Lermontov, or a Plot Exposed", ENCOUNTER, February 1988.

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MARJU LAURISTIN: Not only through *Pamyat*; the tendency exists within the Party too. The Party is not homogeneous; some sections and interest-groups in the Party play on the subconscious fascist inclinations of the population, hoping to capitalise on their investment when the time is right.

—What form would this take?

MARJU LAURISTIN: Well, if the economic crisis goes on, if the food shortages continue, if in addition to ethnic unrest we have renewed waves of strikes in the mines, on the railways, and elsewhere, then a demagogue or a number of demagogues might step in to fill the place of the faltering Communist system and grab the reins of the state. They would come to power by promising all things to all people—as demagogues always do. I foresee a fresh "Time of Troubles" for Russia and the USSR.

—Do you forecast a demagogic "National Socialism"?

MARJU LAURISTIN: I hesitate to predict in detail. All sorts of forces—part Stalinist, part nationalistic, part directly fascist—might stake out claims for power. History abhors an interregnum. Vacant slots of power are seldom left unfilled.

UNDER THE "millet" system of the Ottoman Empire, non-Muslim communities, or what we would nowadays call "ethnic minorities", enjoyed a relatively free life. The Orthodox and Armenian Christians had a good deal of local autonomy. They ran a parallel administration to that of central authority; they could elect their community leaders, collect their own taxes, have their own jurisdiction, and live according to their religion and traditions. They were, in fact, states within the state—autonomous, but not sovereign and independent. Mutatis mutandis, *would the Baltic countries—would you personally—be content with that sort of status?*

MARJU LAURISTIN: No, I would not. We have already regained most of our freedoms so far as domestic policies, freedom of information, and economic self-management are concerned; but that is not enough.

—You want full independence. . . .

MARJU LAURISTIN: We want independence—or, as a minimum, the right to design our own political and economic institutions on the pattern, say, of the Grand Duchy of Finland under the Czars. This would be a stage of transition before full independence.

—But eventually you would want complete independence: that is to say, secession from the USSR, as many voices in the Estonian political spectrum already demand?

MARJU LAURISTIN: As a long-term goal we want full independence. According to our polls, 98% of Estonians demand the right to live in their own sovereign state.

—Wouldn't secession spell the end of the USSR as a unitary state? Can you see Moscow agreeing to Baltic secession and turning its back on the thought that "secessionism" would jeopardise the integrity of the Union?

MARJU LAURISTIN: It's certainly hard to imagine that the three Baltic states could break away from the Soviet Union without the Azeris, the Moldavians, the Uzbeks, the Georgians, the Kazakhs wanting to follow suit. That is why the programme of Estonia's National Independence Party, which advocates immediate secession, is not quite realistic.

It is much more realistic to think of the Soviet Union as an Empire containing an outer rim which is detachable, and an inner core which is not. As the outer rim falls away—and Poland and Hungary, for example, regain their independence—the next layer of republics in the USSR itself, notably the three Baltic states, come to occupy that position as nations allied to the Soviet Union but not part of it.

—Would the hard-line imperialists and centralisers in Moscow fall in with this gradual expiry of "the imperial homeland of Communism"?

MARJU LAURISTIN: They undoubtedly would not. They would fight, and we would have to defeat them.

—There would be a fight. . . .

MARJU LAURISTIN: There *is* a fight.

—But do you mean there could be a fight in the literal sense? Do you foresee armed conflict?

MARJU LAURISTIN: I don't think so. It may come to that, but I don't think it is inevitable.

—Are the populations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania psychologically prepared for a less than peaceful dénouement?

MARJU LAURISTIN: If you're thinking of the Tbilisi experience in April last year—with Soviet security troops surrounding peaceful demonstrators, closing off all avenues of escape, and then wading into and massacring the people—then, yes, the Baltic nations have been prepared for this kind of repression for a long time. But we are unprepared for and unwilling to take any part in a Lebanon or Ulster type of civil war. That is something quite unimaginable for us. For some years after World War II, our people did in fact wage a costly and terrible partisan war against the Soviets. We don't want to repeat that experience. . . .

—But (to play the devil's advocate) would the disciplining of the Baltic nations have to be a dramatic and warlike affair? Could it not be put into effect overnight by relatively peaceful means, and with minimal damage to Moscow's reputation?

Let me put to you the following sombre scenario. Soviet troops are already stationed in large numbers in all three Baltic republics; there would, therefore, be no need to alarm the world and the local population with troop movements.

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Selected Russian detachments would be ordered to occupy, probably over a Saturday-night/Sunday-dawn period, the local airports, railway stations, and bus terminals, the radio and TV buildings, the People's Front and Independent party headquarters, and the editorial offices of all nonconformist newspapers. A few hundred people—independent political leaders and journalists such as yourself—would be taken into custody, and the entire reform and sovereignty movement would be declared "counter-revolutionary", subversive of perestroika, *and therefore illegal. The Kremlin would reinforce its declarations of peaceful intent* vis-à-vis *Western Europe and the world, and it would let it be known that it had acted "in the interests of international stability", more in sorrow than in anger.*

None of this would solve the Baltic problem, but peace of a sort would return to the Soviet peripheries and the Soviet state would have gained a new lease of life.

Does this scenario strike you as absurd?

MARJU LAURISTIN: No. It is, alas, a possibility we have to reckon with. But if it did happen, the present occupation of the Baltic countries would undergo a change of status. "Juridical" occupation, which is what we now have, would give way to a brutal, highly visible, blow-for-blow type of Occupation-régime which would reduce the Baltic area to a war zone, and would automatically become the concern of the whole world. It would also challenge the West, at long last, to formulate a clear-cut Eastern policy.

Unfortunately, the prospect of all these things happening would probably not stay Moscow's hand once it had decided that the demands of the Baltic nations were a threat to the Union's integrity.

YOU SAY THAT A *violent dénouement would challenge the West to come up with a clear-cut Eastern policy. I'm not so sure. The impression of many students of the East-West scene is that if the Baltic Republics were violently repressed, the West would certainly protest, and would apply a number of economic and cultural sanctions; but there would also be relief that a threat to international stability had been defused and that the USSR remained a power with predictable policies. What some of our politicians in the West fear most is not a strong and uncongenial Soviet state, but unpredictability and chaos in international affairs.*

MARJU LAURISTIN: That is a highly erroneous attitude . . . and it harbours dangers for the Western nations every bit as much as for the victims of possible repression within the Soviet Union. I am certain that if the Soviet leadership decided to turn the clock back, it would not simply revert to "Brezhnevism", it would go all the way back to some form of barbarous, possibly military, dictatorship on the model of Stalin.

If that were to happen, two things would follow: (*1*) a régime that uses violence against its own people is much more likely to be violent towards the outside world as well; (*2*) the new Soviet dictatorship would make it its business to increase Soviet military preparedness. This would disturb the military balance and much else besides. World stability, far from being re-established, would suffer an incalculable blow.

—But what do you say to those insiders in the Western foreign policy establishments who argue that the "Cold War" era was one of recognised demarcation lines, and therefore of a high degree of security? Each side knew what sort of political philosophy guided the other side, and how far each could go. With the Soviet Union in turmoil under the slogans of "glasnost" *and* "perestroika", *the gates have been opened to social unrest and centrifugal nationalisms, and the world has become incomparably less safe. The Soviet threat has receded. The danger of instability has grown.*

MARJU LAURISTIN: Let me repeat that this is not the way it appears to us in Estonia. Let me refer you again to the fascistoid elements that lurk behind the popular Russian desire to quash us. If the Soviet Empire, in its final agony, were to become violent against us, the world would be extremely lucky to have to face up to nothing worse than a new "Cold War". It would be much more likely that a *pre-war* situation would arise.

—You are assuming that repression would come from as yet inchoate "fascist" elements rather than from a neo-Stalinist, counter-Gorbachov group in the Party and the Red Army. . . .

MARJU LAURISTIN: The two would unite, to the extent that they are not already one and the same thing. The social and psychological basis for a reversion to dictatorship is the same in both camps. Both have encouraged a stereotyped hate-object to arise in the public consciousness; and that hate-object is the Baltic nations. We have been appointed "the Enemy" in more or less the same way as the Jews were in Nazi Germany.

—Don't you find it surprising that the Russian intelligentsia is not in the forefront of anti-imperial agitation? Under the Czars, it was the intelligentsia who "went to the people" to sensitise them to their unequal status and incite them to rebellion. In the British and French Empires, Left-wing intellectuals at the metropolitan universities played a prominent and decisive role, first in educating the future leaders of the colonies to colonial discontent, and then in helping them to subvert and demolish the Afro-Asian Empires. Today, I see no trace of Russian intellectuals travelling to Moldavia or Kazakhstan to spread the word about liberty and equality and national liberation.

MARJU LAURISTIN: They are not doing it—but *we* are. We are doing this in a limited way within the Supreme Soviet, by having contacts with the representatives of the other minority nations. It may sound immodest, but they look upon us as a source of enlightenment and cultural inspiration. I have met people in Moscow who had come there specifically to meet us because we figured in their imagination as "teachers of freedom" and sources of national self-confidence. It is also quite clear by now that some of the Baltic reformers "go out to the people" in the other Republics, helping them to make citizens conscious of their rights

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and opportunities and to organise their popular front movements. The most recent example of that was in the Ukraine, where the newly-formed *Rukh*[4] reformers' debt to the Baltic model and to the Poles was openly acknowledged. It is a moving experience to be seen as a spiritual model—but it also imposes a heavy burden of responsibility.

—But why are the great-grandsons and great-granddaughters of those vibrant young Russian intellectuals who "went to the people", and about whom so much was written in 19th-century Russian literature, not doing the same? They support Gorbachov's reforms; they are de-Stalinisers, and they are extremely vocal in demanding and exercising the freedoms of opinion, speech, and assembly. But, with some exceptions, such as the late Andrei Sakharov, their cry for liberty is limited to **Russian** *liberty. It would not be the first time in history that a national intelligentsia, having obtained sovereignty for its own nation, refused to share it with others. The shortsightedness of the Hungarian Establishment after the 1867 Agreement with Austria is one warning example.*

MARJU LAURISTIN: The current Russian intellectual generation is very unlike the generation that assassinated Czars and prepared the ground for revolution. It is a generation of pessimists who are fearful for their lives and have a strange distrust of their own people and culture. They support Gorbachov—but they will take few risks. They are a downcast, unhappy, and ineffectual lot—worlds apart from the Baltic intellectuals. Sowing seeds of disaffection in the "colonies" of the Soviet Empire is not something I can readily see them doing, even though they profess to be liberals and opposed to centralised imperial control.

—Does the man-in-the street realise that Western policy-makers look upon the possible secession of the Baltic states in the light of a much larger, global equation in which "international stability" is the decisive factor? In other words, does he know that, while Western public opinion and all leading Western politicians admire and support the revival of Baltic national consciousness and the courage to translate it into reforms, they are not unanimous in thinking that the rapid expiry of the Soviet Empire would be in their interests?

MARJU LAURISTIN: The man-in-the-street does not see his chances of independence in quite that light. Nor, to be frank, do I as a politician. During 1988 and 1989, my friends and I had several discussions with Western leaders and jour-

[4] *Rukh* is an unofficial Ukrainian association for the promotion of the Ukrainian language, culture, and national consciousness.

On not Gloating . . . about the Defeat of Communism

BEFORE I tell you what I think, I would like to tell you what I feel. I think this is a moment of a very special triumph and we shouldn't be bashful in saying it. It's not a moment for gloating, but it is a moment for genuine personal, intellectual, historical satisfaction. It is a moment of the triumph of freedom. It is a moment of the triumph of free men, of great free men, one of whom [Bronislav Geremek] shares the podium with me here today.

What is happening today in Eastern Europe, and also in the Soviet Union, is an expression of the victory of certain basic ideas inherent in the concept of human rights, of individual liberty, of the supremacy of the spirit over abstract material forces. It is a very special moment. These moments don't come often in history. Historians write about them. They punctuate the humdrum of daily life. They demarcate long periods of difficulties and sadness. But these moments do come once in a while and we are living one of these moments; we should be conscious of it and we should savour it, for these are things to remember.

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I BELIEVE THAT *the internal transition in Poland and Hungary will continue and that political consolidation will take place, particularly if the West creatively assesses the economic transformation of these countries, for politics and economics are closely intertwined. But if the West does that, and if the political consolidation occurs (as I believe that it will), then I have not the slightest doubt that what we are seeing today in Poland and Hungary will undertake a geographical expansion to East Germany, where, after all, the object is not to punch holes in the Wall, but to create freedom for the East Germans. And that has international implications for Czechoslovakia, where the Stalinist régime is on its last legs; inevitably to Bulgaria and Romania; and, of course, also to the Soviet Union.*

IT IS INCONCEIVABLE to me that, in the long run, freedom to travel, freedom of political choice, the adoption of a more open economic system would be confined only to Poland and Hungary, or even just to Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and eventually Romania, but not to the Soviet Union. And so freedom is knocking on the doors in the Soviet Union with ever-increasing intensity from without and from within; a movement for freedom within the Soviet Union is also gathering momentum.

Thus, I think, Gorbachov will soon approach the moment of truth: he'll have to define what it means to say "perestroika". "Perestroika" of what, to what? And it will soon prove insufficient to say that "perestroika" means "the revival of socialism"; that will no longer be of sufficient substance. He will also have to answer the question: What is the next phase? It will be very difficult, even in the Soviet context, to avoid defining the next phase in words which will not entail political pluralism and free choice.

That, collectively, means that a new order will be emerging in Europe; that the arangements construed after 1945 are clearly coming to an end. And the task of our collective

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nalists about the fall-out effects of the disintegration of the Soviet state. We asked whether it would mean colonial wars, international conflicts, and the like; and we all came away thinking that a violent unravelling of the Empire would be undesirable and most dangerous.

I am personally of the opinion that it need not and should not happen in that way. My friends and I believe that the state of Russian civilisation and political culture can be changed smoothly and rapidly enough for the transition from Empire to a reduced and democratic state to be peaceful. The change will come from the joint impact of Baltic, Moldavian, Georgian, Armenian (etc.) national-democratic aspirations, combined with the opening-up of Russia to Western media, Western travel, and other forms of communication.

—Would Mikhail Gorbachov be on your side in this enterprise?

MARJU LAURISTIN: Yes, I think he would.

—Would the Russian intelligentsia?

MARJU LAURISTIN: I think so. Gorbachov is apprehensive of the rise of mob sentiments. He realises that Russia's uncivilised masses harbour crude, fascist types of feelings, and he does not want his reforms to sink in a morass of neo-Stalinist fascist convulsions.

—Have you talked to Gorbachov about this personally?

MARJU LAURISTIN: No, but I have reason to believe that these are his fears, and the fears of his leading supporters.

—Would you say Gorbachov is a typical Russian phenomenon?

MARJU LAURISTIN: No, he's untypical. He is a "Westerniser"—far too Western in all his thoughts and feelings to count as a typical Russian.

—Is that why the majority of ordinary Russians seem to distrust him?

MARJU LAURISTIN: Yes. Boris Yeltsin is closer to the ideal Slavic image than Gorbachov.

—Can you imagine Yeltsin in the role of a leader, or as **the** *leader, of a neo-Stalinist fascist alternative?*

MARJU LAURISTIN: No, absolutely not. Yeltsin has been in

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statesmanship, of American leadership, partnership with the West Europeans, of the dialogue with the Soviets, will be to define the parameters and the framework for the new arrangements in Europe. "The German issue" has already resurfaced and we'll not be able to avoid it. And if we are serious about talk of "ending the division of Europe", about "Europe, whole and free", about "a common European home", then we'll have to address a number of specific and concrete issues.

WHAT OUGHT TO BE *the security arrangements in such a Europe? My own shorthand answer is that a more stable way of providing a framework for change in Europe will be not to abolish the existing alliances, but to use them as two pillars of a wider European security system in which the Warsaw Pact remains—but no longer as an instrument of ideological oppression, only as an expression of certain shared geopolitical interests, particularly in territorial stability.*

If we are serious about the new arrangements, we will have to arrange for cross-cutting memberships, with some nations members of certain alliances in the area of security, but also members of other operative economic institutions based on altogether different principles. I have in mind particularly the notion that we will probably face the need to accommodate to the reality of states being members of the Warsaw Pact and simultaneously members either of EFTA or in some fashion associated with the Common Market. We will have to promote new forms of regional cooperation in Eastern Europe so that the rejection of Communism does not lead to renewal of national conflicts, or the revival of traditional ethnic and territorial disputes.

LAST, NOT LEAST, **we will have to think of new arrangements for Germany, for it is inconceivable to speak of "the end of the division of Europe" without the end of the division of Germany. Hence, we'll have to give serious thought to new arrangements which give the Germans that to which they're entitled—self-determination and freedom of choice—and yet give Germany's neighbours that to which they're also entitled—political and territorial security. Here again, a variety of solutions can be contemplated, although they need to be discussed and their implementation will be far more complex than their articulation.**

But one can certainly envisage the "reassociation" if not the "reunification" of the two Germanys through some confederational arrangement (which gives the Germans the freedom of choice to which they are entitled), coupled with special security arrangements based, perhaps, on treaties relating the two alliances (thereby giving Germany's neighbours the security to which they're also entitled).

FINALLY, *all of that has to lead to basic, far-reaching institutional changes within the Soviet Union. "Perestroika" has pushed the Soviet Union into desirable historical directions. It has created greater room for manoeuvre for Eastern Europe. But it still needs to be institutionalised on a broad, firm basis involving the transformation eventually of the Soviet system itself. That, too, is now on history's agenda.*

That process, in the final analysis, means the end—the fading out—the defeat of one of the two great totalitarian doctrines that challenged and dominated much of our lives during this century. Both of these doctrines had a particular pernicious concept of the subordination of the individual to society and society to the state. One of these doctrines perished in the flames of war in the middle of the century. The other is undergoing its final spasms, its terminal agony . . . peacefully, I hope.

But together it means that something very basic is prevailing: the concept of society based on the supremacy of the individual, on the freedom of choice. What we are witnessing today is part of this triumphant process of history.

Zbigniew Brzezinski

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close alliance, in our Inter-Regional Group, with wise people like Andrei Sakharov and Gavril Popov. He has been learning rapidly.

—Is Gorbachov aware that he is thought to be unrepresentative of the ordinary Russian's gut reactions?

MARJU LAURISTIN: Well, he can't think he's *representative* of them. He comes from Stavropol; he's a Cossack (the Turkic word *kazak* means adventurer or rebel), and Cossacks are a very different breed from the Russians. Also, Gorbachov must be aware from the reactions of the Russian population that he's not one of them. He is more popular in the West and the Baltic countries than he is at home.

—Do you believe he is aware that his reforms may lead to the collapse of the Union?

MARJU LAURISTIN: I think he is. He knows that the accusation that he is "undermining the security and cohesion of the State" is the strongest card in the hands of his many conservative critics. He is therefore doing his utmost not to give the impression that he is deliberately destroying the Empire. That may explain the bitterness and vehemence of the Central Committee's warning to the Baltic reformers.[5]

—When you were elected to the People's Congress and then to the Supreme Soviet, I imagine the hard-line majority of Deputies must have been appalled to hear you and your colleagues speak the way you do. . . .

MARJU LAURISTIN: Oh, yes. They were both horrified and openly hostile.

—Didn't you find this frightening? You are, after all, a fairly small group in the middle of a mass of Deputies who are old hands at intimidation.

MARJU LAURISTIN: We are not intimidated. When you are involved in battle, it is quite normal to receive blows as well as give them.

—That is, if I may say so, a very courageous attitude, and I respect it. Does Gorbachov?

MARJU LAURISTIN: Yes, he does. Even if he doesn't say so personally, he shows it permanently at the sessions of the Supreme Soviet. He often looks at our benches in the Chamber to see how we are reacting: "Are you with me? . . . Do I have your support?" He has often given us tacit encouragement, which we frequently return. But the Central Committee's sweeping attack on us may put an end to all that.

—Were you surprised by Deputy Yury Vlasov's great attack on the KGB on 31 May last year?[6]

MARJU LAURISTIN: Yes, I was. I hadn't known Vlasov personally; he has enormous courage. His speech was the greatest thing that happened at the Congress. He was applauded by the Balts and other democrats, but the majority sulked and were hostile. The Congress was clearly divided.

—Here was another man demanding the destruction of the Empire's repressive machinery. . . .

MARJU LAURISTIN: That's what he was doing, but he was not alone. There was an incredible chorus of criticism of the Party, the Bureaucracy, the Military, and individual Ministers by the rank-and-file from all walks of life and all geographic areas of the USSR.

—Fear seems to have disappeared from the hearts of the Soviet people. . . .

MARJU LAURISTIN: Yes, very surprisingly, it has. This is an all-important new fact in our lives. I think that is Gorbachov's greatest achievement. He is a politician of outstanding intelligence, with a feel for the realities of public life. He is also a man of vision who will make detours to reach what he wants, but will not be easily deterred. Above all, he has the courage to admit his mistakes. The idea of opening up the People's Congress to hard-hitting debate was his. So was the decision to have most of the sessions conveyed to the people by television. He brought the full gamut of democratic give-and-take into every Soviet home. For the first time in their history, the Russian people are getting an education in democracy. If anything in *glasnost* and *perestroika* gives me hope, it is this attempt to democratise the Soviet masses.

—Democracy and empire, democrats and imperialists, make uneasy bedfellows—that has been our experience with the British, French, and Dutch Empires. Will the Soviet experience be different?

MARJU LAURISTIN: No, the two cannot go together. Democracy, if and when it is even partially realised, will end the Soviet Empire.

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[5] The Statement by the Central Committee of the CPSU on the Soviet Baltic Republics was issued on 26 August 1989. It had been drafted in Mikhail Gorbachov's absence from Moscow, and at the time it was widely rumoured that it did not have his approval. There are, however, no grounds for believing that he did not concur.

> "Making use of the freedom of international links, the nationalist figures entered into contact with overseas organisations and centres, essentially drawing them into the internal affairs of their Republics, and made them their consultants and advisers, as though these people from the West had a better understanding of what is really needed for the Baltic peoples, as though they were guided not by their own secret and overt designs with regard to our country but did indeed care for the well-being of Soviet people. . . .
>
> The affair has come a long way. Serious danger threatens the destiny of the Baltic peoples. People should know what kind of abyss the nationalist leaders are pushing them towards. Were they to achieve their aims, the consequences could be catastrophic for the peoples. . . ."

[6] See in ENCOUNTER, January-February 1990, "Dismantling the KGB State", by Yury Vlasov.

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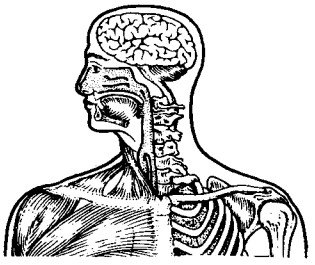
SCIENCE

Can We Explain the Mind?

New Problems, Old Contradictions—By GUNTHER S. STENT



FATHOMING THE MIND is both very easy and very difficult. On the one hand, mind is a trivial thing; every person has it and knows intuitively what it is all about. On the other hand, mind is the most mysterious thing in the universe, and generations of scientists and philosophers have been unable to account for it ratiocinatively. The difficulty of providing a ratiocinative account of mind arises from the mind's being not merely a part of the body (as is, say, the liver). It also happens to be the very instrument that we have to use if we try to understand our mind. So the scientist's or philosopher's mind in thinking "Aha! So this is how I came about . . . and how I work . . ." would, like Baron Munchhausen, have managed to pull itself out of the mud by its own hair.

Niels Bohr, accounting for the seemingly contradictory findings of quantum mechanics, drew attention to the fundamental limitation of scientific research based on the Munchhausen strategy, pointing out that an instrument cannot be included in an investigation while it is also serving as a means of observation.[1] This mutual exclusion between instrument and observational object is the reason why we cannot fathom mind from a single, coherent set of beliefs about the world. Mind has to be approached from several, mutually incompatible, starting-positions.

Discussions about the nature of mind usually begin with that philosophical chestnut, the Mind-Body problem. Ever since Plato declared mind and body to be fundamentally different, philosophers have argued about whether they in fact are. No doubt the (physicalist) statements we make about people's bodies are different in kind from the (mentalist) statements we make about their thoughts and feelings. But that difference does not necessarily imply that mentalist statements do not refer to some kind of bodily function, especially since—as Galen had shown by the second century AD—a bodily organ, the brain, is the seat of consciousness and sensation. Mental phenomena might be nothing but products of the brain—which is what adherents of monism believe. Mental phenomena might also be more than, or fundamentally different from, brain products—which is what adherents of dualism believe. Philosophers have put forward a variety of monist and dualist solutions of the Mind-Body problem, depending on their general metaphysical outlook: idealist or naturalist, rationalist or empiricist.

Most biologists, and especially neurobiologists, reject the idealist dualism of Plato and favour instead the naturalistic monism advocated by Aristotle. Following Aristotle, the founder of their discipline, biologists regard the mind as a wholly natural thing, whose investigation is part of the scientific study of the physical world. (That Aristotle mistakenly identified the heart as the seat of mental functions, while assigning to the brain the role of a mere radiator for dissipating the cardiac heat generated by thinking, is not, of course, an argument against his naturalism. Thus, taking Galen's later correction of Aristotle's error into account, biologists generally hold that mental phenomena—feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and desires—arise in the brain as products of that network of myriads of nerve cells. Some monist-extremists even claim that "mind" and "brain" refer to the same thing, and hence speak of "a Mind-Brain".[2] The origins of the mind, as regards both its ontogeny (embryonic development in an individual) and its phylogeny (evolutionary development in the species) would, therefore, have to be accounted for in terms of the origins of the brain.

Most biologists are not only monists, but also naive realists, just as are most practising scientists. Like people-in-the-street, they believe that there exists a real world of things external to them and independent of their experience of it—and that this real world actually is as they see, hear, feel, and smell it. As a biologist, therefore, I begin this discussion of the mind from the viewpoints of monism and naive realism because it is, in fact, difficult to start in any

GUNTHER STENT, *Professor of Molecular Biology at the University of California, Berkeley, is one of the senior Western figures in science and philosophy. Among his books are "Molecular Genetics" (1970), "The Function and Formation of Neural Systems" (1977), "The Paradoxes of Progress" (1978), "Morality as a Biological Phenomenon" (1980), and "Shinri to Satori" (1981). His previous contribution to* ENCOUNTER *was "To the Stockholm Station" (March 1980).*

[1] Niels Bohr, "Light and Life", *Nature*, vol. 131 (1933), pp. 421-23, 457-59.

[2] See P. S. Churchland, *Neurophilosophy* (1986).

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other way. Before long, however, as I develop some perspective on mental phenomena, I will have to abandon first naive realism and then monism, in order to deal more adequately with the mind.

Accounting for the evolutionary origins of the human brain poses no difficulties greater than those in the way of accounting for the evolutionary origins of any other of our organs. The brain of *Homo sapiens* is obviously a mere elaboration of the brain of an ancestral fish that lived 100 or so million years ago. That fish's brain was, in turn, an elaboration of the nervous system of an ancestral jelly-fish which lived about 500 million years ago. The nervous system of that ancestral jelly-fish was already capable of performing the basic brain functions: interpreting signals taken in by sensory receptors from the environment, and commanding movements that are appropriate responses to environmental changes. As the brain became more and more elaborate in the course of its evolutionary history—that is to say, as it came to be composed of more and more nerve cells, and as the network linking these cells became more and more complex—the brain gained the capacity to perform more and more sophisticated functions, culminating in our fabulous intelligence. In line with Darwinist principles, this evolutionary development towards an ever-more complex brain would have been driven by the forces of natural selection, which allowed ever-more clever animals to be fruitful and multiply in previously vacant ecological niches.

WHEN, IN THIS EVOLUTIONARY history, did mind make its first appearance? Was mind already present 500 million years ago, when no animals higher on the scale of nature than jelly-fish were populating the earth? Or did mind appear about 100 million years ago, during the development of animals with backbones? Or was there no mind until about two million years ago, when the genus *Homo* arose from its ancestral ape?

The answer to this question depends, of course, on the explication of the concept of "mind", and hence on whether any animal species other than our own can be said to have a mind. Even a monist-extremist, who believes that the mind *is* the brain, does not have to take the view that fish have a mind. A monist might even deny that our closest living animal relatives, the chimpanzees and gorillas, have a mind—because, despite their seemingly obvious capacity to have feelings, thoughts, beliefs and desires, these apes lack our capacity for language.

But there is no doubt that we, the people, do have a mind; and from the monist-biologist point of view, mind arises *de novo*, again and again, each time a fertilised human egg undergoes embryonic development and winds up with a mature brain. To account for the ontogenetic origins of the brain—the goal of the discipline which is styled "developmental neurobiology" (in which I myself happen to work)—it is necessary to answer the following questions.

(*1*) How do the many biochemically, morphologically, and electrophysiologically differentiated cell types represented among the myriad nerve cells of the mature brain come into being upon successive divisions of the fertilised egg?

(*2*) How do these nerve cells manage to migrate from the embryonic sites at which they are born to their definitive locations in the developed embryo?

(*3*) Finally, how do these nerve cells manage to form the specific interconnections of the mature cerebral network responsible for mental functions?

These developmental processes are still far from being understood, but a few insights have been gained into them. Chief among these insights is the realisation that there is no chief insight, *no* overarching single principle that holds the key to explaining the embryonic development of the brain. In other words, there is no analogue in developmental neurobiology of the genetic code or of the central dogma of molecular biology, which held the key to explanation of the gene. Instead, in nearly every general phenomenon of interest to the developmental neurobiologist, at least two quite different mechanisms seem to be at work. For instance, at least two different mechanisms seem to be responsible for the development of embryonic precursor cells into specifically differentiated nerve cells. These mechanisms have been categorised as the European Plan and the American Plan. Under the European Plan, the differentiated status of a nerve cell is determined by its line of developmental ancestry, or cell lineage. Under the American Plan, by contrast, the cell's status is determined by the neighbourhood in which the cell happens to find itself at the time of differentiation.

To give another example, at least two different mechanisms guide the migration of nascent nerve cells from their sites of origin to their definitive locations. Under one of these mechanisms, the migrating cells are guided by a concentration gradient of some chemical substance, while under the other mechanism cell movement is guided by a landscape of differentially adhesive substrates.

A third example is provided by the diversity of mechanisms responsible for the formation of specific nerve cell connections—perhaps the most fascinating of all the problems posed to the developmental neurobiologist. One of these mechanisms provides for the specific mutual recognition of two cells destined for connection by virtue of their carrying specific surface molecules which have an affinity for each other. Another mechanism provides for the initial formation of semi-specific, or even non-specific, provisional connections, followed by chemically or electrically driven selective processes which affirm those provisional connections as functional, or reject them as dysfunctional.[3]

SUPPOSE WE WERE ABLE TO GIVE a reasonably satisfactory scientific explanation of the evolutionary and embryonic origins of the brain in the general terms I have outlined. We would then still face the problem of how to account for mental states (such as feelings, beliefs, and desires) in terms of brain states (such as electrical activity patterns in the network of cerebral nerve cells). The possibility of such a "reductionist" explanation of the mind—

[3] An excellent presentation of current knowledge about developmental neurobiology can be found in Purves and Lichtman, *Principles of Neural Development* (1985).

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which would reduce psychological theories about mental phenomena to neurobiological theories about brain phenomena—is rejected on principle by many philosophers and psychologists. The reasons for their rejection include the following claims.

Thus the need for neurobiologists, at the very outset of their studies, to make a subjective conceptual boil-down of the mental phenomena to be accounted for, deprives their eventual explanations of the quality of objective validity which the scientific method—to which they are committed for providing an account of the brain—is expected to possess. For the validity of a theory is held to be objective only if it does not depend on the particular mind that happens to have formulated it. This unsatisfiable demand for objectivity in the analysis of mental phenomena is, of course, the bane of psychoanalysis. And it is why there are good reasons to believe that the project of total reduction of psychological to neurobiological theories, even though it ought to be possible in principle, is utopian in practice. It is likely, therefore, that a significant residue of unreduced psychological theory will remain with us long into the future.[4]

By acknowledging this limitation of our ability to reach objectively valid theories about complex phenomena, we encounter another insight into the relation between our mind and reality: namely the inadequacy of naive realism.

According to the theory of knowledge developed by Immanuel Kant in the late 18th century, sensory data neither directly mirror a real world in the mind (as maintained by the metaphysics of naive realism) nor do they provide the mind with a basis for inventing reality (as maintained by the metaphysics of idealism). Rather, Kant recognised that the mind comes to know the world via a constructive process. In this Kantian constructive process, sensory impressions become experience—that is, gain meaning for us—only after the mind has interpreted them in terms of *a priori* categories (such as time, space, and object) that the mind brings to, rather than derives from, experience. Tacit resort to propositions whose validity is similarly accepted *a priori*—such as "Some A are B; therefore all A are B" (induction), or "The occurrence of a set of conditions A is both necessary and sufficient for the occurrence of B" (causation by A of B)—then allows our mind to construct an orderly reality from our experience.

By the middle of the 20th century, Kant's theory of knowledge had finally made its impact on the human sciences under the general banner of structuralism. Structuralism emerged simultaneously, independently, and in different guises in such diverse fields of study as psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and biology. It holds that knowledge about the world enters the mind in a highly abstracted form: namely, as structures. In the preconscious process of converting primary sensory data step by step into structures, information is necessarily lost—because the creation of structures, or the recognition of patterns, is nothing other than the selective destruction of information. Thus, in structuralist parlance, reality is "a set of structural transforms" abstracted from the phenomenal world. Any set of primary data becomes meaningful only after a series of operations has so transformed it that it has become congruent with a structure pre-existing in the mind. It would follow, therefore, that (popular beliefs of people-in-the-street and of most scientists notwithstanding) the mind does not operate according to the tenets of naive realism but according to what I believe should be called "structuralist realism".[5]

(*1*) The *intentional* character of mental states is said to make them "emergent" properties of—and hence not theoretically reducible to—brain states.

(*2*) The introspective nature of the perception of mental states is said to render them categorically different from—and hence refractory to—explanations by theories about extrospectively perceived brain states.

(*3*) Mental states such as feelings, beliefs, and desires are said to be concepts of a naive "folk-psychology"; they do not correspond to anything in the real world, any more than the concepts of the vital force of "folk-biology" or the phlogiston of "folk-thermodynamics".

In my view, these claims about the impossibility, in principle, of reducing theories about mental states to theories about brain states can be, and indeed, have been successfully refuted. In any case, from the scientific perspective, reductionism is the only game in town. As a neurobiologist—although not as a philosopher—I have to hold that since mental phenomena arise in the brain, they must be explainable, in principle, by neurobiological theories. However, this view does not imply that a total reduction of psychological theories to neurobiological theories is actually possible in practice. The reason for this caveat is that the brain belongs to a class of phenomena whose very complexity limits the extent to which theories designed to explain them can be successfully reduced by theories designed to explain less complex phenomena.

The technical meaning of complexity implies that more information is needed to describe a more complex phenomenon than a less complex one—because it comprises more individually distinct elements, which interact in a greater diversity of ways than the less complex phenomenon. Thus, a gallon bottle containing a hundred thousand billion billion randomly-moving helium molecules is a much less complex phenomenon than the human brain containing merely ten billion nerve cells. Once you've seen one helium molecule, you've seen them all; and anyhow, all helium molecules do is to collide and exchange momentum. By taking just their collision into account, one can produce a satisfactory statistico-mechanical explanation of the pressure that the helium molecules exert on the walls of the bottle.

It is clearly impossible, however, to take into account more than a tiny fraction of the vast variety of potentially important hormonal and electrophysiological interactions among the myriad of potentially distinct individual nerve

[4] G. S. Stent, "Hermeneutics and the Analysis of Complex Biological Systems", in *Evolution at a Crossroads: The New Biology and the New Philosophy of Science*, ed. Depew and Webster (1984), pp. 209-25.

[5] G. S. Stent, "Limits to the Scientific Understanding of Man", *Science*, vol. 187 (1975), pp. 1,052-1,057.

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cells or cell ensembles of the brain. Indeed, since the cerebral nervous system is so highly interconnected that there is usually some neural or hormonal pathway leading from any one point to any other point, it is simply not possible to set out on any analysis of brain function without deliberately ignoring most of the extant pathways.

The first task faced by reductionist mind-brain neurobiologists is, therefore, to decide which nerve cells, or cell ensembles, and their interactions, are likely to be critically relevant for the mental phenomenon to be accounted for, and which can be safely ignored. This decision has to be based on the neurobiologist's own "pre-understanding" of the brain—a term which refers to the life of experience and prior insights that a would-be student of complex phenomena must bring to the initial task of separating the signal to be attended to from its contextual noise. If one neurobiologist judges a set of cells and interactions to be critically important—i.e., to be the signal—while another neurobiologist judges them to be merely noise, the two of them are likely to arrive at different explanations of the same phenomenon. The controversy to which two such rival explanations about the brain then give rise is usually difficult to resolve; there are no crucial experimental tests that would decide between them. Provided that both explanations are internally coherent in the first place, new contradictory empirical evidence can usually be accommodated by either theory, by slightly enlarging the set of cells and interactions initially selected for attention.

STUDIES OF the neurobiological basis of vision have shown that our nervous system does seem to operate according to structuralist-realist principles, at least at the initial stages of sensory processing. Visual perception begins with an image cast by the visual surround upon the retina. Visual perception ends with a meaningful interpretation of the image, such as "This is a chair", or "This is a piece of furniture", or "This is a wooden object". Evidently this interpretation depends not only on the image itself, but also on the context in which it is produced and on the intentions of the viewer.

In other words, visual perception is an interpretative process that makes explicit for the viewer the meaning of information that is originally merely implicit in the image. Since the total information flux in a succession of visual images is vast, the nervous system (its billions of cells notwithstanding) could not possibly begin to interpret it without first boiling it down, or abstracting it, to manageable proportions.

The earliest stages of this abstraction process are evidently guided by some Kantian categories, whose *a priori* character is attested to by their representation in the built-in circuitry of the visual system. For instance, one of these Kantian categories is that of "Object", with which we usually associate the properties of fixed shape, cohesiveness, and sole occupancy of any given place at any given time. To abstract information relevant to object-shape from the image, the visual system takes into account that the contours outlining objects are likely to be those domains in the image where there occurs an abrupt change in light intensity.[6]

The pioneering work in the development of a theoretical basis for fathoming how the brain performs this interpretative process was done by David Marr in the 1970s. The most characteristic feature of Marr's approach was that he regarded visual perception as a hierarchical process—based on the representation in the neural circuitry of a set of categorical hypotheses about what the world of things is like. Marr treated those interpretative processes as computations performed by serial computer-like operations in the brain, in which single nerve cells function as the basic information-carrying elements of the network.[7]

The line of investigation pioneered by Marr is now generally designated as "computational neuroscience". Since Marr's death, his computational strategy for fathoming the mechanisms underlying higher brain functions has been extended and modified by theories which go under the names of "connectionism" and "parallel distributed processing". They bear these designations because their basic tenets include the views that local networks of nerve cells (by virtue of their mode of interconnection), rather than individual nerve cells, are carriers of abstract information and that the computations that are performed on these local networks are carried on in parallel, rather than serially. I believe that it is still too early to judge how much connectionist and parallel distributed processing strategies are likely to advance our understanding of brain function; but it appears that these strategies have already led to substantial progress in computational problem-solving, or in artificial intelligence.

BUT HOW CAN IT BE THAT if our mind brings the Kantian categories to the world of things *a priori*, they happen to fit that world so well? To this question, which had already troubled Kant, a Darwinist answer was provided only in the 1940s, by Konrad Lorenz: "What is *a priori* for the individual is *a posteriori* for his species." That is to say, the success of our cerebral circuitry in constructing a version of reality that matches the world of things is merely another product of the process of natural selection which guided our evolutionary history. Any early hominids who happened to think that before is after, or that near is far, or who failed to apprehend that *A* is the cause of *B*, perished without issue.[8]

Characterisation of the Kantian categories as *a priori* for the individual does not mean, however, that they are present already full-blown at birth. Instead, as the cognitive developmental studies that Jean Piaget initiated in the 1920s have shown, the Kantian categories arise post-natally, as a result of a dialectic interaction between the developing human nervous system and the world. Piaget showed that the Kantian categories, though immanent in the mind, are constructed gradually during childhood, via a succession

[6] G. S. Stent, "Cerebral Hermeneutics", *Journal of Social and Biological Structures*, vol. 4 (1981), pp. 107-124.

[7] David Marr, *Vision* (1982).

[8] Konrad Lorenz, "Kant's Lehre vom apriorischen im Lichte gegenwärtiger Biologie", *Blätter für Deutsche Philosophie*, vol. 15 (1944), pp. 94-125.

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of distinct developmental stages.[9] These phylogenetic and ontogenetic explanations of the origins of the Kantian categories have given rise to a discipline at the interface between biology and philosophy styled "evolutionary epistemology".[10]

HAVING SEEN THE NECESSITY for abandoning naive realism, and noted the cognitive limitations inherent in structural realism in the face of biological complexity, let me now consider the shortcomings of the monist approach to the mind. For whereas monism may be an adequate and maybe the only way to deal with mind as a natural phenomenon, it is ill-suited to dealing with mind as a *moral* phenomenon.

Let us grant that (in line with the tenets of monism) mental states are brain states and that (in line with the tenets of evolutionary epistemology) our brain is stuck with some innate mental states, including the cognitive categories by means of which we deal with the world of physical objects. But since our species has always lived as a social animal, the tenets of evolutionary epistemology lead to the conclusion (still fully in harmony with monism) that, as the result of natural selection having acted in the evolutionary development of our brain, mind is stuck also with a set of innate moral categories.

The set of moral categories allows the mind to deal with the no less important world of human subjects and to provide for the organisation of our communities. These moral categories find expression in the ancient theory of human nature, which holds that we are half-beast, half-divine: that we live both in as well as out of Nature. The Judaeo-Christian version of this theory has been passed on to us via the story of the Garden of Eden in the Book of *Genesis*. As archaeological records reveal, the theory dates back at least to pre-dynastic Egypt; and it seems likely that when, 100,000 years ago, the Neanderthalers took the trouble to bury their dead, they did so because they also had an inkling of that theory.

The centrepiece of that ancient theory of human nature is the person, the moral agent, who comprises both a body and a soul. The person's body is endowed with naturalistic properties, which it shares with the bodies of beasts and which are amenable to study by the scientific methods of biology. The person's soul is endowed with a set of non-naturalistic properties, such as uniqueness, irreplaceability, sacredness, or being an end in itself—and—above all, a mind with free will. The soul shares these non-naturalistic properties, which are beyond the reach of scientific study, with God rather than with the beasts. It is because of the difficulty of rejecting that ancient theory out of hand that, since the time of the Ancients, philosophers and theologians from Plato through St Augustine and Descartes to Kant have struggled with the half-beast half-divine paradox of human nature and put forward dualist rather than monist answers to the Mind-Body problem.

According to the old and still vigorous tradition of moral philosophy descended from Plato, value—the central moral category—cannot be accounted for by Aristotelian naturalistic-monist considerations of mankind as beasts of nature. Rather, moral value derives from its rational justification in terms of the non-naturalistic properties we attribute to persons as moral agents, to which the scientific method is not applicable.

OF THE NON-NATURALISTIC properties that the traditional theory of human nature attributes to the person as a moral agent, free will is one of the most central. In order to judge an action by a moral agent as *morally* good or bad we must presume that the agent both willed it and could have willed (i.e., was free to will) it otherwise. Discussions of the Mind-Body problem usually raise the false antinomy of free will *versus* determinism. This antinomy is false because the deep question to be resolved in connection with the monism-dualism antinomy is *not* whether there is any possibility that the actions of beasts are not wholly governed by the causative forces of the natural world. They are clearly so governed. The deep question rather is whether the free will of persons is one of their natural properties after all (as was recently claimed by the philosopher Daniel Dennett[11]). Arguments relevant to this question must, therefore, be addressed to the issue of whether our notions about the natural world can, or cannot, accommodate entities possessed of free will.

Admittedly, a natural world such as that envisaged in the late 18th century by Laplace—where events are totally determined by initial conditions, from the beginning to the end of time—could hardly provide scope for the exercise of free will. But, as it turns out, our actual natural world is not Laplacean. Rather, it is largely *indeterminate*, its events being subject to microphysical (i.e. quantum mechanical) or macrophysical (i.e. "chaotic") contingencies. However, this dénouement does not mean that the natural world, being non-Laplacean, can therefore accommodate free will.

The conceptual essence of a moral agent with free will—i.e., a person—is his or her autonomy. By "autonomy" I mean here that although the person's will is by no means immune to causal influence by the natural world, there does remain a residue of independence from such causal influence. By virtue of this residue, the person's rational faculty is the final arbiter of what is actually being willed. The outcome of this autonomous arbitration process is not capricious or random, but determined by the soul. Hence this residual degree of independence of the will cannot have its source in the quantum-mechanical or chaotic contingencies of our non-Laplacean natural world which (though they may render its events indeterminate) do not admit processes that are autonomous *vis-à-vis* its causative forces. Thus, it is the notion of its autonomy that removes free will and its final arbiter, the soul, from the realm of natural properties of persons.

[9] Jean Piaget, *Genetic Epnistemology* (1971).

[10] D. T. Campbell, "Evolutionary Epistemology", in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, ed. Schlipp (1974).

[11] Daniel C. Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (1984).

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I believe that the paradoxical aspects of the dualist theory of human nature—the problem of free will, of natural and non-natural properties of the person—can be fathomed best in terms of Niels Bohr's notion that complementary aspects of reality give rise to rationally irreconcilable concepts which can never be shown to be in direct empirical contradiction. Bohr's concept of complementarity does not refer to the ordinary, everyday meaning of the term; that is, two parts making a whole. It refers, rather, to a basic aspect of the world which is not only incompatible with naive realism but is incompatible even with the more sophisticated structuralist realism.

Bohr first introduced the complementarity concept (in 1927) in order to categorise the relation between the description of light in terms of waves and the description of light in terms of particles. According to Bohr, the wave-like spatial continuity of light propagation (on the one hand) and the particle-like nature of light effects (on the other hand) each express an important feature of the phenomena associated with light. These features are complementary aspects of reality because, although they are conceptually irreconcilable from a mechanical point of view, they can never be shown to be in direct or empirical contradiction. The reason why no empirical contradiction is demonstrable is that close analysis of either the wave nature or of the particle nature of light demands mutually exclusive observational arrangements.

These mutually exclusive observational arrangements needed for the study of complementary aspects turn out to be at the root of another fundamental limitation of the analysis of natural phenomena. In a physical measurement it is never possible to take directly into account the interaction between the object and the instruments employed for measuring it. As Bohr pointed out, an instrument cannot be included in the investigation while it is also serving as the means of observation. Hence the monist project of having the Mind-Brain study itself by scientific methods is unlikely to reach to the bottom of the night.

The most far-reaching epistemological consequence of Bohr's complementary concept, however, would appear to be this—that light, far from possessing the properties of both wave and particle, takes on one or the other property only while we are watching it under one or the other of the mutually exclusive observational arrangements. Thus, according to Bohr, in the drama of existence we play the dual role of actor and observer. Or, as for reality, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein's characterisation of her home town, Oakland, California, there is no *there* there. It seems surprising, indeed bizarre, that this conclusion, which spells the end of all forms of realism and is thus antithetical to the very metaphysical foundations of science, should have been forced on us by physics.

Five years later, Bohr extended his complementarity notion to the Mind-Body problem. He pointed out that recognition of the epistemological limitation presented by mutually exclusive observational arrangements is suited also for reconciling the apparently contrasting points of view which separate physiology (or, as we say nowadays, molecular and cellular neurobiology) from psychology. The necessity of considering the interaction between the measuring instruments and the object under investigation in atomic physics, he said, corresponds closely to the peculiar difficulties met with in psychological analyses, when mental content is invariably altered if attention is concentrated on any single feature of it. Here Bohr was thinking especially of free will, which he said must be considered a trait peculiar to conscious life, permitting neither a causal description in the term of classical mechanics nor a statistical description in terms of quantum mechanics.

Let me, in concluding my discussion of the phenomenon of mind, return to Kant. By way of what Robert Merton has called "anticipatory plagiarism",[12] Kant had already applied Bohr's complementarity concept to the Mind-Body problem. (Anticipatory plagiarism occurs when someone steals your original idea and publishes it 100 years before you were born.)

In the 17th century, René Descartes proposed "substance" dualism as the solution to the problem posed by the dualist half-beast half-divine theory of human nature. Descartes maintained that the world comprises two distinct substances—the *res cogitans* of mind and the *res extensa* of matter. When by the mid-18th century the success of Newtonian physics had made the concept of a non-material substance hard to swallow, Kant replaced Cartesian substance dualism with what I think should be called "epistemic" dualism.

Kant put forward the idea that the nature of our mind is such that we construct not one but two metaphysically distinct worlds. One of these worlds is that constructed by the theoretical reason of science, whose natural objects (including the brain of *Homo sapiens*) are governed by the laws of causal determination. The other world is that constructed by the practical reason of morals, whose rational human subjects are governed by laws of freedom that individual free will imposes on each person's actions. Here practical reason justifies the concept of free will as a logically necessary constituent of the theory of personhood that governs our interpersonal relations as moral agents.

Thus, according to Kant's formulation, the beastly and the divine, the natural and the non-natural, theoretical reason and practical reason, all appear to be complementary aspects of human nature. I said earlier that the mind's theoretical reason makes it possible, at least in principle, to give a monist-naturalistic account of the phylogenetic and ontogenetic origins of the mind, and a reductionist account of mental functions in terms of theories about the brain. Indeed, the latter-day discipline styled "sociobiology", dedicated to the Evolution-oriented study of the social behaviour of animals, has applied its Darwinist theories grounded in theoretical reason to try to explain the evolutionary origins of practical reason.

Sociobiologists working in the Aristotelian monist-naturalistic tradition consider *Homo sapiens* to be just one more social animal; and so they have little trouble in putting forward more or less plausible theoretical support for the

[12] Robert Merton, *On The Shoulders of Giants* (1965).

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evolutionary fitness of an animal having a brain with mental states corresponding to the belief in Platonic dualist-idealist metaphysics. That is to say, from the sociobiological perspective it is not difficult to provide a line of reasoning that shows how the genome of a rational social animal—acting in accord with a belief in the sacred, unique person endowed with autonomous free will—would be provided with a higher differential reproductive potential than the genome of an animal not acting according to such a belief.

Accordingly, some sociobiological enthusiasts expect that, thanks to their Darwinian insights into the evolutionary origins of practical reason, we can finally rid ourselves of our antiquated ideological baggage—in a way similar to that in which neurotics are thought to be able to rid themselves of disabling obsessions once psychoanalysis has uncovered their psychogenetic origins. Even if practical reason did provide Darwinian fitness to our cave-person ancestors (so the reasoning might go), *we* have no further need of it; and these days it just causes us no end of trouble.

This expectation, however, is unlikely to be realised. Our intuitive attribution of free will to the person is obviously incompatible with our attribution of causal necessity to nature. But, as rational beings, we cannot abandon the idea of moral freedom any more than we can abandon the idea of scientific causal necessity. Indeed, those rare individuals who have abandoned either of these ideas are usually diagnosed as psychopaths, and most of them live in prisons or mental institutions.

THUS, our view of the relation of the person to his or her actions must be fundamentally different according to whether we view him or her as a moral agent or as a natural object. As scientists, we must regard the person as a material object, whose actions form part of the causally determined events of the natural world. As moralists, we must regard the person as a rational subject, whose actions are governed by an autonomous free will which is not causally determined by the laws of nature.[13]

This is the complementary and deeply paradoxical character of the mind with which evolution has stuck us. But it is the only mind we have.

[13] G. S. Stent, ed., *Morality as a Biological Phenomenon* (1980).

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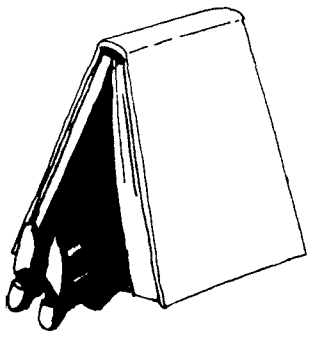
DISCUSSION

Maurice Cowling's "New Right"

Of Gurus & Sages

By Julius Gould



MAURICE COWLING'S extended epistle from Peterhouse ("Irony, Geniality & Malice" in ENCOUNTER, November 1989) is a curious *mélange*. At one level—where there is ample geniality—he is, in effect, reviewing the new edition of his book *Mill and Liberalism*. (His article, we are told, "forms a part of the new introduction" to that work.) Few authors are given such an irresistible opportunity: and the book is duly praised for its prescience and other sterling qualities. But Cowling's main concern is with recent British political and intellectual history, and with how the New Right arose to combat what he calls "liberal virtues". I share his desire to put the New Right into a proper historical perspective. But in so far as there is, or was, such an intellectual current, it was *international* in its origins. That dimension, perhaps for reasons of space, does not loom large in Cowling's presentation. Of course, there could be debate over the range of countries (such as the USA and France) that would need attention. But we cannot really rest content with the Oxford-London-Cambridge triangle—including, though it does, that illustrious zone which comprises Peterhouse.

On the narrower British question there is indeed, as Cowling senses, an important field of historical study. How far did the practice of the Thatcher governments originate or find guide-lines in "ideas"? and whose "ideas"? As Cowling observes: "Historians will make their usual enquiries about . . . any friends whom Mrs Thatcher may have been in the habit of consulting." And he has a little list of thinkers—many of whom he clearly deprecates. (Some of them are allotted whole footnotes of derision.) I wonder how many of them would seriously help Mr Cowling with his enquiries. I for one would be very wary of his approach. First of all, there are restrictions resulting from the principle of confidentiality: and that principle should not surrender to historical enquiries, even if they come from Peterhouse. And, secondly, I should be a trifle worried about his interpretations. Their geniality might be soothing but the irony could be less agreeable. Any malice could simply be ignored.

Cowling is not, it would seem, an easy man to please. Thinking back to 1963, he is right to recall that what he calls "liberal virtues" in morals and politics then enjoyed a remarkable vogue. And he was certainly on the attack. In that same year he published another book, *The Nature and Limits of Political Science*, assailing, among much else, the liberal orthodoxy of the social sciences. I wrote then of that book that "it does no harm to be reminded that our ranks include some who are vacuous and some who are sinister. But the effect is ruined by indiscriminate over-statement . . . ." I felt then, as I feel now, that liberal decencies can be distinguished from liberal excess and hypocrisy. I would prefer to describe the "virtues" that Cowling abhors as illiberal, socialist, and authoritarian. For their exponents were, indeed, grossly indifferent to market requirements and absurdly successful in imposing their views on lesser mortals. Cowling could deservedly claim credit for having opposed them when others were bedazzled or bamboozled: a quantum of self-praise is certainly in order.

His positive message, however, is not so easy to summarise or applaud. It does seem abridged in his reproof to Michael Oakeshott and F. A. Hayek:

> ". . . neither has conceptualised the combination of politeness and negative bloodiness which is the essential antidote to liberal virtue."

I note that he says "essential antidote," not "only alternative": but it probably comes to the same thing. Such mixes of "tone and posture" do not lend themselves to proof. But they would seem in Cowling's eyes the quintessence of Toryism or Conservatism. Alongside, appears to run another "need": he writes of a "temperamental negativity which is needed everywhere".

These are large claims, or, rather imperatives—derived no doubt from Cowling's interpretation of English history. He sees a gap between his ideals and the principles which attract most of Mrs Thatcher's intellectual supporters. He is right to do so. For I know of no evidence that the advocates of "negative bloodiness" or stark illiberalism have been crucial to the Thatcher years: and my guess is that Cowling's musings

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JOHN VINCENT *was a Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and is now Professor of Modern History at the University of Bristol. His publications include "The Formation of the Liberal Party" (1966, n.e. 1980) and, as co-author, "The Governing Passion" (1974).*

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on the subject amount to a blue and irrelevant herring. This genre of bloodiness is often found in sophisticated circles on the Right—especially among those who are devoted to *hierarchy* and *deference*. I am inclined to regard such talk as a kind of sentimentality comparable to the cant talked on the sentimental Left about "caring" and "compassion".

Both kinds of sentiment please their advocates: and neither is a useful guide to policy. They are prejudices (in the Burkean and most other senses): they are impossible to verify or disprove. Obviously Cowling is entirely free to applaud "negativity"—however positively—and to set up any standards or imperatives about Conservatism that appeal to him. But it certainly does not follow that what are "essentials" for him form a necessary posture for other conservatives.

Cowling does not demand *expressis verbis* that we think as he would like: and he claims no monopoly on behalf of the (somewhat varied) cadres of the Peterhouse Right. He accepts that many forces were at work at the beginning of the Thatcher era—free-market economics, journalism, as well as what he calls oddly the London School of Economics Right (and on that his list is strangely incomplete). But since most, if not all, of those circles are uncommitted to "negative bloodiness" there is a clear inference that, whatever their strength, they have failed the Cowling test. I suppose they will bear such a verdict with liberal fortitude.

Again, he tells us that there are "no skeletons" in his cupboard—the contents of which have, hitherto, not been a matter either of general interest or controversy. I accept the assurance. But even that virtue, quite apart from any others that he is too modest to mention, confers on him no special right to test us on our conservatism as if we were a set of ageing candidates for the Cambridge Tripos.

SOMETHING, finally, about "the Left". Whatever his prescience elsewhere, Cowling observes that in 1963, in the heyday of "the end of ideology":

> "Though Raymond Williams was about to become a guru, it was by no means obvious that Hobsbawm, Perry Anderson, T. Eagleton and E. P. Thompson would become gurus too."

Now I do not deal in gurus—but there were quite a few of us around who did *not* think that ideology had died, who had seem glimmerings of its return in other countries, and who suspected that the tough-minded, flexible and assiduous people he mentions would push the gentler social-democratic thinkers out of the limelight. (Some of these "gurus" also had the special advantage of a difficult prose style.)

And so it proved . . . . The watershed was the international student rebellion of the late 1960s on which Cowling also offers this recollection:

> ". . . I certainly said, and probably believed, . . . that, if the revolting students of the Student Revolution were revolting against Lord Beloff, Lord Annan and Sir Isaiah Berlin, there must have been *something* to be said in their favour."

I do not question that he said such a thing—still less that he "probably believed it". But, if taken seriously, a belief of this kind is oddly parochial and impossible to square with the facts. There are whole shelf-loads of books open to an historian's scrutiny which show how parochial—and irrelevant—this was. There were countless thousands of students in revolt against "the system"—and most of them, alas, had never even heard about Beloff, Berlin or Annan, let alone Cowling and myself. . . . Their leaders had more sinister preoccupations—and many of Cowling's unexpected "gurus" were quick to see that this was so. I predicted that this would happen: and so again it proved.

Peterhouse Blues

By Max Beloff

MAURICE COWLING, in "The Origins of the New Right: Irony, Geniality & Malice" (ENCOUNTER, November 1989), makes a case for there being something in Britain that can be called "the New Right", but only to the extent that some people have introduced new ideas, or refurbished old ones, within the broad framework of the Conservative Party. It is not self-standing in the way in which this could be said of the American New Right, nor indeed has it been much concerned in the new agenda of public and private morals which has figured in the transatlantic debate. But Mr Cowling's own highly personal attitudes colour what he writes, and prevent him from fully understanding what has actually gone on. The opacity of his prose style can also be an obstacle.

He talks of the Conservative Research Department "once restored to doctrinal respectability by Mr Robin Harris" having supplied advisers to government. As I was a member of the team at Conservative Central Office that appointed Mr Harris as well as a number of other members of the Department's staff, I find this quite mystifying. If "doctrinal respectability" means alignment with the basic beliefs of the Thatcher régime, this took place under Mr Harris's predecessor, Mr Peter Cropper—later Mr Nigel Lawson's special assistant. Central Office is perhaps a better place from which to study the Conservative Party than Peterhouse.

While, except for my single contribution to the *Black Papers*, I find it odd for me to appear in this article at all, I note that each reference to me is an example of the "malice" which Mr Cowling wrongly believes to be a Tory virtue. I do not know why he should talk of a "skeleton in my cupboard". The fact that I was for some time a member of the Liberal Party is no secret—many other Tories have been drawn from the Liberal ranks, and have brought a recognisable element into the Tory make-up. Does Mr

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Cowling think of Winston Churchill as having had a skeleton in *his* cupboard? Or Disraeli?

Mr Cowling admits that he

> ". . . certainly said, and probably believed, in the late 1960s that, if the revolting students of the Student Revolution were revolting against Lord Beloff, Lord Annan and Sir Isaiah Berlin, there must have been *something* to be said in their favour."

It would be hard to be sillier than that. Not only are the views of the three of us totally different, but students, however revolting, would have been unable to revolt against Sir Isaiah or myself since we had no authority over them. Nor, if I remember aright, was University College, London—of which Lord Annan was then Provost—a particular centre of that foolish outcrop of political activists engaged in play-acting emulation of their counterparts in Berkeley and Paris. Mr Cowling was clearly as ignorant of the politics of the Left as of those of its critics.

If Mr Cowling were more familiar with the Conservative Party, he would surely have had something to say about the Conservative Political Centre as a main channel of diffusion through the Party's ranks of new currents of ideas. I humbly suspect that my 1978 Swinton Memorial Lecture, *The Tide of Collectivism—Can It Be Turned?*, published as a pamphlet by the CPC, was read by more Tories than many of the intellectual homilies of Mr Cowling and his friends—it certainly brought me rather unexpectedly into mainstream politics.

Loyalty to one's college is always touching. But all that need be said about Peterhouse was said by Tom Sharpe in his *Porterhouse Blue*, which made such splendid television: "Porterhouse, Porterhouse—to live and die with Porterhouse!"

"The Peterhouse Right"? Come off it, Cowling!

Tory Intellectuals?

By John Vincent

A GIFT for stating the obvious never comes amiss; and if Professor Cowling's purpose was to remind us of the unimportance, variousness, and indifferent quality of the New Right, he succeeds. As for his incidental tweakings of well-publicised egos, nobody could object to that. His approach to intellectual history, part gossip column, part telephone-directory, serves to remind us that, in English terms, the intellectual climate means in practice small groups of friends (or enemies) who have known each other most of their lives. Less important, but equally true, is Cowling's demonstration that the New Right was not particularly New nor was it particularly Right (or even right). Especially on the economic side, it was of far longer duration than commentators remember, belonging indeed as much to the age of Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson as to the decade of Margaret Thatcher.

"The New Right" happened to be around when an orthodoxy collapsed in the 1970s. It did not cause that collapse. It also happened to be around when "the Peasants' Revolt" against Ted Heath found itself in need of doctrinal props; and so it adventitiously gained a political function from a party row about a personality. The New Right gave some intellectuals the illusion that they mattered; with the possible exception of Hugh Thomas, and the probable one of Woodrow Wyatt, they did not. The illusion of being the fly on the wheel of the coach, making the carriage bound along, was pleasing to these entrepreneurs of low-level dissidence, as they saw themselves. But the real theme of the 1980s—Treasury Control and containment of public spending—was as traditional as Mr Gladstone and Neville Chamberlain.

"The New Right" did not only raise small groups of intellectuals slightly higher in the foothills of the polity than they merited or expected. It gave the Yuppie Left a bright, breezy slogan for their demonology. For the *Marxism Today* culture, the invention of "the New Right" was in part a splendid marketing device, and in part an old-fashioned Leftist paranoia of the "Bankers' Ramp" and "Armament Kings" type.

The practical conclusions are two. One is that the Conservative Party should be rescued, academically, from the shade of the "New Right" *groupuscules*. It should be studied as a party of government, of habit, of careers, of economic desire—but not of ideas. The way to study Conservatives is to meet Conservatives; and here Leftist writers are at a loss. They resemble early Victorian anthropologists, whose willingness to pronounce on the nature of man bore no relation to their readiness to commune with natives by sleeping in straw huts. Naturally, self-imprisoned in their intellectual ghetto, Leftists concentrate on printed texts—which, in Tory terms, means the ephemeral, the tangential, and the epiphenomenal.

The other is that Professor Cowling's approach, bland, mellow, and optimistic, is quite, quite wrong once you go outside his genial companions. Reality, which he left behind about 1959 in favour of his sub-culture, belongs more firmly than ever to that Loony Centre where heart replaces mind. True, the Marxist Left are no problem, being allies rather than enemies; but they are few, and mostly just pretending, their Marxism being a fig-leaf for a sentimental and moralistic Left Liberalism.

WHY IS Cowling at sea? First, because his analysis of the media is based on the press, which he knows, but not on television, which he does not. Television news is the main means of public information, and it is a field where the post-War orthodoxy gives not a toehold to other views: a classic case of the liberal denial of pluralism. Second, because he has not experienced the massive deepening and widening of the hold of Guardianite clones on the public-sector professions. Oxbridge, which Cowling knows, may remain richly various in opinion; provincial universities, not to mention the schools, have become one-party states in a way inconceivable when Mr Cowling's twenty-year retrospect began. From his Oxbridge college window, Cowling sees a flowing

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The Peterhouse Effect . . . Cowling's "New Right"

PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE, *is a charming little college: an ancient foundation, architecturally attractive, with a highly rated cuisine and cellar, and some very distinguished Fellows, especially in science and engineering. I spent seven very interesting years there. Do not be deceived by that enjoyable television series of Tom Sharpe's "Porterhouse Blue", which is only partially accurate: loyal Petreans insist that the book was really based on the author's own Cambridge college, Corpus Christi.*

But who can really know any Cambridge (or Oxford) college? There are depths below depths, caves within caves, exquisite anfractuosities carved and incrusted by time and the slow, tortuous operation of their inhabitants. So nothing about any college can surprise me: not even the fascinating revelations about Peterhouse in the November issue of that excellent periodical ENCOUNTER. *For we now learn that Peterhouse, or rather, a dynamic group of select spirits described as "the Peterhouse Right", has been a decisive force in our recent history: to it we owe the intellectual revolution which brought Mrs Thatcher to power. This, at least, is what we are told by Mr Maurice Cowling, a Fellow of the college. He has taught history there for 26 years and "the Peterhouse Right", who are named by him, are largely his pupils and friends.*

SUCH A CLAIM **is not theoretically incredible. Great movements have often flowed from small cells. In Oxford, Merton College generated a new movement in medieval philosophy, Wadham was the nucleus of the Royal Society, Oriel of the Oxford Movement. In Cambridge, Peterhouse itself has had its moments. It was the centre of extreme royalist Anglicanism under Charles I, and then, in compensation, of liberal opposition to the Anglican monopoly under George III. Mr Cowling would like to restore that monopoly, thus swinging the pendulum back again. But what, we may ask, has this to do with the new Toryism of the 1980s? To answer, we must look at the two movements separately.**

FIRST, "THE PETERHOUSE RIGHT". *What is their philosophy? The opinions which I have heard from them at that high table, or read in their published writings, are indeed distinctive. They have coherence and pedigree. Some of them were uttered at similar high tables, with increasing freedom as the decanters circulated, in the time of George I and George III (or, as some of the Peterhouse Right would now say, of James III). That the Revolution of 1688 was a crime, the Enlightenment a disaster; that Bishop Warburton was the profoundest thinker of the 18th century and Dr Pusey of the 19th; that "the confessional state" should never have been replaced by a plural society; that "the wrong side" won the First World War and that Hitler should have been allowed to win the Second—these opinions can no doubt be argued, although their present advocates prefer merely to assert them. As Mr Cowling has written, there is no point in arguing one's beliefs: one should impose them by other, more effective means. I am not now contesting his views, or his right to utter them. I merely wonder how they can have led to the free-market Toryism of the 1980s.*

FOR THE PEDIGREE OF THATCHERISM **is very different. It goes back not to Lord Salisbury (Mr Cowling's hero), or to Puseyites and Jacobites, but to Joseph Chamberlain, to Sir Robert Peel and, in economic doctrine, to Adam Smith. None of these were true-blue Tories. Adam Smith was a Whig: how Tories like Dr Johnson disliked him! Peel was disowned by the Church and the Tories, and his followers became Whigs. Chamberlain was a Radical Liberal in politics and a Unitarian in religion. In Mr Cowling's language, all these had "skeletons in their cupboards". He himself, he says proudly, has no skeletons in his. Never, even as an undergraduate in Tom Sharpe's Corpus Christi college, has his mind been tainted by a liberal thought.**

LIBERALISM, *that is their enemy: the Liberalism which undermined the Anglican monopoly and the cosy "Old Corruption" of the 18th century and destroyed their protective tests; which opened public life to Dissenters and Jews; which allowed scholars to question authority and orthodoxy; and which, by these betrayals, brought us where we are. Perhaps, by preaching thus, the Peterhouse Right has given some indirect support to Mrs Thatcher, as enemies of her enemies, but they face opposite ways: she forward to free capitalism, they back to the cave of Polyphemus or Cacus: no doubt excellent men in their way (though of unpolished manners) but hardly free-marketeers: rather reactionary members of the trade union of Amalgamated Troglodytes.*

IN HIS ESSAY, *Mr Cowling honours me with a mention. He says that I do not like neo-Tories or the Peterhouse Right, and he taxes me with ingratitude to those who fixed my election to his college and thereby (as he says) "made my breeze to blow". The remark seems somewhat patronising, but since their patronage embraces the Prime Minister, the Tory Party and the Government, who am I to complain?*

It is true that our views differ, and perhaps I have insufficiently appreciated their table-talk. I prefer free spirits to the "reactionary bloodiness" advocated by Mr Cowling, the Socratic to the dogmatic method of teaching. So I have sometimes wondered why he engineered my election. He now says, somewhat delphically, that it was "to serve everyone right". Whatever this means, his motives were evidently abstruse and oblique. In colleges they often are. Nothing, in those learned little societies, is quite what it seems.

SO LET US STAY **above ground. My general point is simple. As there is Toryism and Toryism, so there is liberalism and liberalism. To identify all liberalism, in all ages, with the excesses of permissiveness and radical chic (which I dislike as much as any), and to attack it as such, wholesale, from an inaccessible cavern receding into an indefinite past, seems to me an odd way of teaching civic virtue, true learning, or even history. And I doubt if it has had the slightest effect on the electorate, the Tory Party, or the government of our country.**

H. R. Trevor-Roper

in THE INDEPENDENT *(London)*

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tide in his favour. Without wishing to diminish his pleasure, it must be said that it is not like that. The Left-Liberal hegemony has not diminished, is not diminished, and will not go away.

Cowling's other main error lies in his belief that opponents have been converted to the Tories. If conversion there was, it was not to the Tories. (We prefer the populace.) The Tories may at times have been the lesser evil; but no intellectual interest dwells in that practical consideration.

Intellectuals who wanted reasonably sensible decisions, a reasonably stable society, and a reasonable degree of national success—let not ambition mock these humble joys—turned not to the Tories, still less to thoughts of reaction, but to the Thatcherite element in a probably transient Thatcherite-Tory coalition. The Tories, as such, did not beckon: why should they?

For who are the Tories to my generation? They are the party which debauched the currency. They are the party which consistently connived at inflation. They removed the priceless blessing of ethnic homogeneity. They are the party of the big state and corporatism. They suppress Latin in schools. They lend hope to the IRA, and compare parts of our national territory to colonial Cyprus. They have weakened our national identity. They offer a restless suburban middle class nothing but money, and an urban working class nothing but lack of esteem and insensitivity. In all this, the Tories may well represent the lesser evil; but that apart, Tories and intellectuals have little to say to each other: a mutual deafness which will probably do no harm whatever.

A Reply

By Maurice Cowling

Lord Beloff offers unimportant reminiscences. I, too, have an unimportant reminiscence—of helping Mr George Gale, when he was editor and I was literary editor of *The Spectator* in the early 1970s, to decide not to make Professor Brian Griffiths economics editor, on the ground—which we supposed to have been established in the course of a long interview—that he was an imperfectly converted Social Democrat!!! (It is worth adding that in Tom Sharpe's *Porterhouse Blue*, Porterhouse is not about Peterhouse and that I omitted Mr Cropper's name advisedly.)

To Professor Vincent I would say two things. First, I watch a great deal of television and am well aware that it is far from being what I would wish it to be politically and intellectually. But it is not, in my view, uniformly as offensive as Professor Vincent implies, and nothing is gained by pretending that it is.

Secondly, about the question on which he describes me as being "quite, quite wrong"—whether the English intellectual and political climate is better than it was in the 1950s—he ignores the fact that there is now, what there was not then, an articulate intelligentsia which is either economically anti-socialist or positively conservative in disposition. This may or may not be a good thing, just as intelligentsias may or may not be good things in general. But it certainly exists and ought not to be dismissed merely in order to maintain the intellectual affectation of believing that intelligentsias can *never* be good things.

In reply to Professor Gould. I agree that there has been an "international" aspect of the English New Right which was connected with the Cold War and helped ex-communists, ex-socialists and ex-liberals to see their way to supporting Mrs Thatcher, just as it helped ex-Trotskyites and ex-Democrats to see their way to supporting President Reagan in the United States. My instinct, however, is that this frame of mind was at its strongest intellectually in the 1950s (when Encounter was founded in order to embody it), and that it was edged aside intellectually—however useful it may have been politically against the Labour Party in the 1980s—by "Powellism" on the one hand, and by *Private Eye* and the radicalism of the late 1960s on the other.

Mrs Thatcher deserves greater credit than she is likely to receive for perceiving the political implications of a free capitalism in China, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and no doubt I ought to have mentioned, among others, the name of Lord Chalfont. I suspect on the whole that the public's admiration of Mrs Thatcher's vigilance towards the Soviet Union is connected less with its perception of her as an anti-Marxist than with the perception that she is willing to stand up to any power that threatens British interests and independence, whether in Eastern Europe, Argentina, or in the EEC.

Already in the United States it is being suggested that American conservatism will die with the Cold War (if the Cold War is, in fact, dead). It is important for the future to understand that Mrs Thatcher's conservatism is so English a phenomenon, and, as Lord Beloff follows me in pointing out, is so consonant with the "traditional" conservatism of the Conservative Party, that it need be very little affected whether Russian tanks appear, or do not appear, in Eastern Europe.

May I correct a misprint in "Irony, Geniality & Malice"? Mr Samuel Brittan has not become "enthusiastic" about Mrs Thatcher but, as everyone knows, "*un*enthusiastic".

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THEATRE

Fringe with Style

By Malcolm Rutherford

TO BEGIN with *The Loud Boy's Life*, one of two works by Howard Barker subtitled *Plays for the Right*. It was not one of the three Barker spectaculars that reached the London stage in January, but it may be a useful introduction.

Barker states in a note to the text that *The Loud Boy's Life* "was commissioned as a two-part television play by BBC TV. It was vehemently rejected on submission in 1980". He goes on:

> "Should the day arrive when television is liberated from its terror of the people and becomes an instrument of enlightenment rather than a modulator and manufacturer of public opinion, there may be an opportunity for this play to be seen in its entirety. [A version of it has been shown at the Warehouse Theatre.] Perhaps by then this examination of the ringing depths of the reactionary mind may have been rendered quaint by passing time. If, as I suspect, Fricker [the play's central character] is always with us, then those curious to examine the original text will find it, like an unclaimed suicide, in a steel drawer at the BBC."

You can see, even from that, that Barker can write. The question that comes to mind, however, is how he could ever have conceivably thought that the play would be acceptable to the BBC, or indeed ITV: there is no difference between the duopoly in these matters.

The BBC cannot have objected merely because of the language and the frequent use of one particular four-letter word that seems to stud all Barker's work. That is a trifle compared to the rest, and remember these were the days before Lord Rees-Mogg presided over television censorship. The play includes scenes from an annual male dinner in something like the Mansion House where men, politicians among them, do strip-teases on the table and imitate women feigning orgasms. It is also intensely political: notably in one scene where the Tory Party seeks to choose its leader more by the old "customary processes of consultation" rather than by the modern method of "one MP, one vote". It is wholly inaccurate on this, but again that's a minor detail. *The Loud Boy's Life* ends with the urn containing the remains of the key character being drunkenly dropped on the crypt floor of one of London's cathedrals, and someone getting down to eat them up.

The work, in my view, is stunning, but leave that aside for the moment. For we come back to the question: how on earth could Barker have thought that the BBC would touch it, despite having given him the commission? Was he trying to set the Corporation up, or is he just naive?

Of course, the BBC was right to have nothing to do with it. It could not even have broadcast the play in a bowdlerised version, assuming that Barker would have allowed one. The press, politicians, and indeed many of the viewers would have been up in arms at such licence. The consequence of that would have been to further erode what liberty the BBC has to take such risks. It seems to me to take a very stupid man not to see that, unless Barker wanted simply to make the point that he was against the Establishment and vice versa. Even that approach, however, does not stand up, for Barker claims to want to reach the people. On the matter of *The Loud Boy's Life*, it is a fair bet that the people would have been rock solid behind the Establishment in objecting to it. They may also have found some of the more intellectual references incomprehensible as well as offensive.

Yet Howard Barker is manifestly not a stupid man. He brims with erudition. The amount of reading that lies behind his work must be enormous. He is witty, writes in verse as well as prose and—at his best—in a kind of mixture between the two. He has vast imagination and ambition. Above all, he is steeped in all the devices and techniques of the stage.

So has Barker matured with age, as the three London productions in January might suggest? Perhaps, but there is still a recognisable thread in his work. It is not so much revolutionary fervour as sod-offness, but sod-offness tempered by a desire for his characters to be loved—and always technically brilliant. Moreover, it is not as though Barker is suddenly enjoying West End success. He has made it to the fringe and to the Royal Court, and even then the reviews have not been wholly ecstatic. The change, however, is that what began as a minority cult following has begun to grow. Barker's reputation should now go up sharply. Contrary to his innate—or affected—beliefs, it is sometimes better to begin with an élite, then work downwards, rather than the other way round.

SEVEN LEARS at the Royal Court, as its title suggests, has something to do with Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the Seven Ages of Man. I doubt if anyone not familiar with *Lear* in particular and Shakespeare in general will fully comprehend it, though I could be wrong. The novelty is to bring in a character not in the original. This is Clarissa, Lear's wife, a woman so full of self-righteousness that even Cordelia dislikes her. The young Goneril and Regan rather dote on their father. "You once ran with me the length of the sea-shore", Goneril tells him. "I've never forgotten that." And between them Goneril and Regan behave like a pair of childish, backward daughters, some-

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times speaking in unison, not at all like the gorgons in the Shakespeare play.

In the briefest of introductions (eight lines, to be precise), Barker says that it is all to do with psychology: repression leading to a hatred of the mother that, he claims, is unjust, but perhaps necessary. Forget it. This is Barker being pretentious. *Seven Lears* is a play about a man who is clever, lonely, sexually indulgent, and who happens to be a King. It is also beautifully written. This is Lear talking to Clarissa in the early stages:

> "I think that I am the most melancholy and degenerate character, so sunk in contemplation of myself I walk with stooping shoulders and lids half-draped over my never-sparkling eyes, white-skinned with horror of the sunshine and prematurely bald, incapable of friendship and though wealthy, inclined to theft. I steal the clothes of women and insinuate myself in wardrobes listening to their acts of love. Poverty disgusts me, but equally does wealth."

Lear takes on as his Fool the man called Horbling who used to be his father's chief adviser. The text moves, consciously or not, into blank verse:

> HORBLING: I was your father's minister.
> LEAR: I know the face.
> HORBLING: And gave ten years of good advice.
> LEAR: And yet he died.

There is also the farce, mixed with pathos—and the use of the stage. Lear is persuaded by an inventor that God had nothing against man trying to fly. He agrees to go up in an aircraft rather in the spirit of King Canute facing the incoming tide: more to show the limits of his powers than their extent. The machine fails to take off, of course, but it is a splendid piece of theatre. To have that and the rest is quite something. Not many playwrights could do it.

ALSO AT THE COURT were a few performances of a shorter play called *Golgo* which moves between the Crucifixion and France around the time of the Revolution. Again, it has a pretentious subtitle: *Sermons on Pain and Privilege*. I did not see it, but read the text and it appears to have all of Barker's technical versatility, including the use of a chorus not dissimilar to Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and, indeed, drawing on Greek drama. The erudition rarely remains concealed for long.

The triumph was *Scenes from an Execution* at the Almeida in Islington: a fringe theatre perhaps, but nowadays a fringe with style. This is the play that could make Barker more widely known: even a box-office success.

It is much simpler as a narrative than *Seven Lears*, although this implies no less background research. Because the flow of the story is simpler, it allows some of the dilemmas to be posed starkly and more comprehensibly. Principally, it is about the contradiction between the powers of even a liberal state and the freedom of the artist, though there are many other themes besides: sex; feminism; the relationship between mothers and daughters and between artist and critic; and, not least, how liberal is liberal?

Galactia, an artist of undoubted talent, great sexual energy, and more than a streak of rebelliousness, is commissioned by the state of Venice to do the canvas of the Battle of Lepanto, in which the Christians repelled the Turks. Venice has a liberal Doge, not without an appreciation of art for its own sake. Galactia, however, is a realist, not a liberal. She paints the blood and brutality of war rather than the triumph and glory of victory, which was not, ultimately, what she was commissioned to do.

What emerges is a well-made play, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and even a final enigmatic twist in the tail. This is a compliment, although Howard Barker may not like it. Galactia is taken off the commission, sent to prison, and one of her lovers accepts the Doge's charge to start the work again. He is not up to it. A female art critic, not much of a friend of Galactia, describes the new work to the Doge in one of Barker's familiar four-letter words. She advises him to exhibit Galactia's canvas after all.

The penultimate dénouement is that Galactia is released from prison. Her painting receives great popular acclaim, largely because of its realism. (It is not clear here how far Barker is having a private joke, saying that the people were right all along. But that does not matter.) The final dénouement is that when Galactia is invited by the Doge, she accepts. The curtain falls, or would if the Almeida were that kind of theatre.

Barker has never been short of actors and actresses to support him. Galactia, for example, is played by Glenda Jackson, and the acting and staging in all three plays are excellent. Nor do I see any inconsistency in his development. *Scenes from An Execution* is plainly from the same pen as *The Loud Boy's Life*. And a playwright does not have to answer the questions he raises. It is sufficient to pose them in order to sow doubt. The difference between Barker now and the Barker of a few years ago is that he has become much more professional at the job. He is among the best of modern British dramatists.

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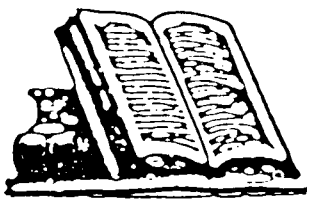
IN THE MARGIN

On Eco's New Novel

How Collages Kill

By Anthony Hartley



It is a delicate business deducing social consequences from contemporary novels. For the relationship of literature to society is not that of a simple 1 = 1, and writers have an odd way of introducing a personal twist into their choice of theme and disposition of character. From the writer's experience his imagination builds, not *rapportage*, but symbols and myths. Dickens's London is very different from that of Mayhew or the social statisticians of the 19th century. The flaring gas lamps of Balzac's Paris light up a monstrous and occult world which certainly has a relationship to the city of romantic wealth and romantic crime, but from which it would be difficult to draw conclusions about society under Louis-Philippe.

These fairly banal reflections seem the more relevant since George Walden has recently chosen to deplore the choice, for the Booker Prize, of Kashuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*.[1] In a familiar elegiac mood about the condition of England, Mr Walden finds in the selection of this book "a literary portent . . . yet another sign that . . . the underlying consensus for immobilism in British society is recongealing". What with butlers, "great houses" and British charm, we may suspect the worst of Mr Ishiguro's work: ". . . for anyone who believes that 1989 may come to mark a new Recessional in British history, the choice . . . becomes profoundly disturbing."

But at this point in Mr Walden's jeremiad common sense begins to put some questions. For while it may be true that we are all bound for a lifetime spent as exhibits in a heritage "experience"—something both I and Walden would find distasteful, even were we to be plied with plenty of food and drink to stimulate our classical conversation—this cannot possibly be deduced from the award of this year's Booker Prize. Leaving aside the question of how representative of British society the Booker jury is, Ishiguro's novel is not a simple wallowing in nostalgia after aristocratic society. It is a study of certain permanent features of human character—dignity, fidelity, devotion to a profession—placed in a background which isolates them for the purposes of analysis. It is a beautifully written, carefully-shaped book—mannered and formal in its style. Whether one likes this will depend on one's literary taste. But such writing is no less "real" than Martin Amis's evocation of a mythical Notting Hill Gate in *London Fields*—Mr Walden's own choice for the prize.[2]

Perhaps the Booker jury chose *The Remains of the Day* simply because Ishiguro's works had been short-listed before, and they felt it was about time he got the prize. But we must also be prepared to entertain the idea that their choice was the result of a penchant for good writing and a subtle knowledge of human nature, rather than the reappearance of a wave of national inertia. George Walden prefers *London Fields*—"brutally vital"—and he is quite entitled to do so. But all this has much to do with personal taste and little with the future of the British Isles.

Let me make myself clear. It is perfectly possible that *le mal anglais* is once again upon us—every nationality reverts periodically to its own brand of eczema, though it seems to be a peculiarly British characteristic to ignore the pimples of others and loudly bewail one's own. But differences in literary style cannot be adduced as evidence, and criticism must begin with some analysis of the theme of a work of fiction before using it as part of a prosecuting brief. Otherwise we are back to trying to settle Marcel Proust's share of responsibility for the Fall of France.

Works of literature will be misunderstood if they are interpreted as mere social symptoms. On the other hand, they are sometimes written with the specific intention of teaching us something. When I read the criticisms of Umberto Eco's second novel, *Foucault's Pendulum*,[3] I was puzzled, since nowhere did I receive much idea of its genre or its theme. Was it fantasy, an exercise in Dungeons and Dragons? Was it a detective story, one of those tangled Latin intrigues where the hero is betrayed and evil wins hands down? Or was it a vast heap of heterogeneous facts, like those lists of words in Rabelais or Sterne which seem meant to confound the reader's intelligence by a multiplication of the grotesque? When I came to read it myself, its nature seemed clear enough. It was a *conte philosophique* in the 18th-century tradition, if not in the 18th-century manner. Like *Candide*, like the individual books of *Gulliver's Travels*, *Foucault's Pendulum* makes a point with some insistence, though at great length and with a wealth of baroque embellishment and satirical digression. That point concerns the nature of contemporary culture.

In its main lines the plot is fairly simple. Three friends work in a Milanese publishing house, the Garamond Press. They are Jacopo Belbo, an introspective intellectual, with a taste for fantastic invention, whose life is permanently unsatisfactory, with the book never written and the girl never taken to bed; Diotallevi, Jewish and knowledgeable about rabbinical and Kabbalistic writings; and Casaubon, the narrator, whose most prominent characteristics seem to be a liking for whisky and a powerfully enquiring mind. To them comes Colonel Ardenti, bearing a manuscript about the Order of

[1] *The Remains of the Day*. By Kashuo Ishiguro. Faber, £11.99.
[2] *London Fields*. By Martin Amis. Jonathan Cape, £11.95.
[3] *Foucault's Pendulum*. By Umberto Eco. Translated by William Weaver. Secker & Warburg, £14.95.

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Templars—a subject which has already engaged their attention in the long after-work sessions in Pilade's bar. It is the Colonel's theory that a group of Templars escaped from the destruction of their Order by Philippe le Bel, carrying with them the Order's treasures and determined to recreate it as a powerful organisation capable of handing down its secret wisdom to succeeding generations. Colonel Ardenti is convinced that they found safety in the underground passages of the town of Provins in Champagne. He has with him a copy of a piece of parchment discovered in these caverns. Once decoded, the message indicates that the Templars had been in search of the Grail—shades of Indiana Jones!—a source of power which would help them to achieve their aim of vengeance on the murderers of Jacques Molay. . . .

At this point Colonel Ardenti disappears or, more likely, is murdered, leaving the three friends with the elements of what subsequently becomes the Plan—a huge legendary construction, which they elaborate over the years to demonstrate to their own satisfaction both how the Templars could have passed on their knowledge and what their aims might be. Everything is gathered into the Plan—every possible secret society, every manifestation of the occult. The Assassins, the Rosicrucians, the Freemasons, the Jesuits even—all are there. One objective of the new Templars is to capture the Earth's forces—something that they propose to achieve by the use of buildings like the Eiffel Tower and the Centre Beaubourg. In the course of the Plan's completion—that is, the completion of a chain that leads from Philippe le Bel to the present day—various sinister and premonitory incidents occur, among them the appearance of a Signor Agliè, who may or may not be the reincarnation of the legendary Comte de Saint-Germain, described by Voltaire as "a man who never dies and who knows everything".

THE PLAN itself is something halfway between a schoolboy joke and an obsession. It ceases to be a joke when, as it is completed, the Templars themselves appear. Unknown to Casaubon and his friends, they have been there all the time. In the dénouement Belbo dies an unpleasant death, suspended from Foucault's pendulum in the Parisian *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers*; Diotallevi is already dead of cancer; and the book ends with Casaubon sitting in Belbo's country-house and waiting for the Templars to come and get him.

So *Foucault's Pendulum* is about a joke, an intellectual construct, that comes to life and that destroys. All the secular nonsense employed in the building of the Plan, the disparate legends and half-baked beliefs, fuse together and take on a malign vitality of their own. The moral is that COLLAGES KILL. For the Plan is a gigantic collage, composed of bits and pieces with no natural cohesion of their own. It represents a cynical use of words and knowledge—a sin, perhaps, against both. The dying Diotallevi makes the point:

> ". . . the cells no longer obey. I am dying because I convinced myself that there was no order, that you could do what ever you liked with any text. I spent my life convincing myself of this, I, with my own brain. And my brain must have transmitted the message to them. Why should I expect them to be wiser than my brain? I'm dying because we were imaginative beyond bounds."

And he explains Belbo's plight—the Templars have framed him as the author of a terrorist bombing—by saying: "The world is behaving like my cells."

Disorder, which could also be seen as a new order, has been created for fun, for a giggle, and the tragic end of *Foucault's Pendulum* symbolises the revenge taken by the universe on those who have blasphemed against the Word. Belbo, Diotallevi and Casaubon have acted irresponsibly, and they are held to account for it. Student waggishness and surreal invention meet their match in an unchanging law which, in the end, punishes *trahison des clercs*: "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The mounds of intellectual garbage heaped up in the name of invention, without any other principle than that of the personal satisfaction of an ambition or an obsession, turn into a toxic mixture that can destroy or digest humanity.

Foucault's pendulum, on which Belbo is hanged, was invented by Léon Foucault, a 19th-century French physicist, to measure the motion of the earth. But the use of the name "Foucault" in connection with the destruction of a man must surely suggest a criticism of structuralism and, by extension, of modern culture.[4] It is a significant pun. Like Belbo we may all be crucified on the culture of the late 20th century.

In fact, Signor Umberto Eco's description of the Plan, with its collage of odds and ends culled from the seamy side of history, forms an allegorical parallel to his view of contemporary culture, recently expressed in a collection of his essays, *Faith in Fakes*.[5] Here too, within the rag-bag of the modern consciousness, are discordant elements gathered together with no priority assigned to any one of them and no logic presiding over their juxtaposition. In the modern cultural cocktail, pop music, blue jeans, display antheaps, reproductions of Leonardo's *Last Supper*, plastic leprechauns, up-market ashrams, supermarkets and waxwork "experiences" all compete for attention. In the transition from one piece of the mosaic to another we concentrate on the flicker rather than the object—just as, for the television addict, it is the sensation of the set being *on* that matters, the specific against loneliness, rather than any individual programme. Contemporary culture forms its patterns out of the myriad disparate phenomena available to it. Out of motor-cycling gear it can make a collage that is sadistic in meaning. Out of a trail of cigarette smoke it can weave a pattern implying tenderness and a love of nature. But change is the thing. Never mind about the moral significance of one set of shapes. Never mind about the ethics of this conspicuous consumption of cultural messages. This is the ultimate romanticism; and the betrayal—the death even—would be to stop looking. Just as an old monk is left piecing

[4] A number of the names in the book suggest such resonances. Casaubon was a French Huguenot scholar of the 16th century. Colonel Ardenti recalls the Fascist "Arditi" shock troops. Abulafia, the nickname of Belbo's computer, is also that of a medieval Kabbalist, etc. . . .

[5] *Faith in Fakes*. By UMBERTO ECO. Translated by WILLIAM WEAVER. Secker and Warburg, £15.00.

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together fragments from the vanished library in *The Name of the Rose*, so we create our culture out of scraps of contemporary life.

Many kinds of media technique have merged to offer us this succession of images and degradation of values: so many that there hardly seems to be an image at all—just a sensation of something, light out of the corner of our eye or music in the depth of our ear, which vibrates in the background. A high-pitched buzz would suffice to show that our friends across the air waves are not neglecting us.

Such cultural experience is strictly meaningless. Since there is no logic and no order to it, there can be no sense. Or rather we provide what sense there is—the most exciting, the most sexy, the most threatening. For since we have a choice of interpretations and a short interval of time can produce a shuffle in the kaleidoscope to some fresh pattern, we can choose what stimulates us most, and even paranoia helps to make the world more significant and exciting. Newspapers and broadcasts which tell us of a new ecological horror every day can give meaning to our actions in so far as they can be seen to be a desperate defence against the coming doom. Of course, after a time, the same old catastrophe becomes boring; then we must proceed to some other threat. Fortunately, there is no shortage of these. No sooner have we got bored with AIDS than crack comes along. When that becomes *vieux jeu*, then it is back to the Third World and the reflection that "We are all guilty". Feeling threatened is one way of living intensely. So we create our Templars for ourselves with a view to remaining one jump ahead of them. It is all a game, is it not?—this cultural big-dipper supplied by the media? But Signor Eco tells us that the mixture damages our health, that our cells revolt because we are imaginative beyond bounds.

The antidote is undoubtedly rationality, common sense even. Casaubon finds these in Lia, the mother of his child. She explodes the idea that Colonel Ardenti's message from Provins is in any way "occult" or "prophetic". For her it is a mere domestic document, "a laundry list".

"Beware of faking", she says, "people will believe you."

But Casaubon is hooked on the Plan: "I didn't want to abandon it. I had lived with it too long." In the end he has to abandon Lia and his child. He has faith in fakes, like Belbo who decides "to withdraw once more into the Plan, where he would suffer no more defeats, because there he was the one who decided who, how, and when".

FOUCAULT'S PENDULUM is an intellectual tragedy. What Umberto Eco seems to be saying is that we have sold our birthright of constructive thought and active rationality for a mess of pottage, mashed and homogenised nonsense, which, none the less, takes on its own deadly vitality. We succumb to a cultural "Pick 'n Mix", whose possibilities are so varied that they divert us from thinking to any purpose. And certain of the mixtures are dangerous. Think of how lunatic, and, therefore, negligible, the mixture of ideas which lay at the origins of National-Socialist racial theory must have appeared at the beginning. Think how harmlessly batty the views of many new-born religious sects seem today—harmless until one reads that human sacrifice is alive and well in Ohio. The hippy communes of the 1960s were communities which had a rather higher rate of violence than that in the unregenerate world outside—in their father's house there were many Mansons. Unreason kills, and cultural confusion is reflected in dire deeds. The Templars are always after us. But they are our own creation.

The theme of Umberto Eco's book is a vast one and concerns the basis of contemporary civilisation. But is *Foucault's Pendulum* a literary success? Despite the wit and humour with which this philosophic tale is told, despite such brilliant passages of writing as the description of a sinister and Gothic Paris—the Paris of Eugène Sue—one has the impression that Signor Eco himself has been a little too attracted by the Plan for the good of the book's shape. The huge piles of facts or non-facts amassed by Belbo and his friends certainly establish the Plan as a dominating reality, but also get in the reader's way and actually form an obstacle to understanding the author's purpose.

Nevertheless, this is a remarkable book. As in Eco's first novel, a sense of doom hangs over the world he has created. In *The Name of the Rose* we witness the break-up of a culture;[6] in *Foucault's Pendulum* culture is already atomised, and we face the disastrous consequences of its fragmentation. In the earlier book destruction came about through individual wickedness, diabolical in its extent. Here evil is tawdry, a construct from a rubbish-heap of fears and superstitions. But the confusion and disintegration it causes are the same. Just as Brother William and Adso have to flee from the burning monastery, so the comfortable background of Pilade's bar, so much the "in-place" during the Milanese student upheavals, offers no refuge to Casaubon, Belbo, and Diotallevi. They are hunted down by disease and by the Templars. This is a sombre conclusion to what began as the fun of faking.

There is little about character and not too much in the way of plot in Eco's novel. It is didactic, having as its objective the desire to inform us that something is rotten in late 20th-century culture. And since this is the author's purpose, perhaps it would be better to ask him about the nature of contemporary society rather than posing questions to Mr Ishiguro and the Booker Prize jury which they have no idea of answering. And perhaps it is not so much an inert sinking into traditional ways that is the threat in Britain today as the fragmentation of thought and the distraction of attention brought about by a media culture whose standards, in a way, are hardly relevant, since it is its existence that is the trouble.

We can, with difficulty, do something about standards, but how can we remedy the passivity of the individual in face of a recreation which has eliminated such participatory amusements as "Shakespeare and the musical glasses"? To have faith in fakes is bad; to have faith in fakirs is worse; but worst of all is to have faith in the flicker. Umberto Eco has something very serious to say in his latest novel. It has hardly been discussed.

[6] See my article in ENCOUNTER, "Eco's Great Mystery", March 1984.

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LETTERS

Europe's Doorstep

"A COMMUNITY OF INTERESTS" by Dominic Lieven in the September/October 1989 issue of ENCOUNTER is thoughtful, insightful and provocative.

I discussed the same topic with Heinrich Brüning, Germany's last democratic Chancellor before Hitler, when he was in exile and a lecturer at Harvard during World War II. Continuing previous conversations which had taken place in Berlin when he was in office and I was a foreign correspondent, he formulated his conception of Germany's role in Europe: "Geographically we must see Germany in Europe as one perceives the threshold in a corridor between East and West. Its function could be benign when it aids peaceful exchanges or it could be nefarious if the doorstep at either entrance is too elevated. Then, instead of furthering passage, it becomes an obstruction over which one stumbles. That was one of Hitler's lacks of perception and we stumbled into war." This is not a direct quote but a paraphrase of a clear recollection.

ROBERT W. KEYSERLINGK
Vancouver

"The Burt Affair"

CYRIL BURT was impulsively and therefore unjustly condemned for fraud by British psychologists and more particularly by their learned and professional association, the British Psychological Society—so writes *M* in his "Column" of September-October 1989.

M, R. B. Joynson, the author of the recent revisionist *The Burt Affair*, and the readers of ENCOUNTER are, of course, free to consider the matter at regular intervals, and it is good to have a variety of socio-ideological contexts made salient for each reconsideration. However, the story is not quite as cut and dried as *M* tells it. The Council of the BPS did not act precipitously. In fact, in the late '70s it was accused of dragging its feet. After all, arithmetical inconsistencies and testing ambiguities had been pointed out by Professor Kamin of Princeton as early as 1974. Oliver Gillie, a geneticist as well as a journalist, presented his evidence of the wider anomalies in 1976. The February 1980 statement of the BPS Council was a duly considered one.

The crux of the matter for most people was the anomalies in Burt's own research evidence published in the learned journals. And here it is sad that *M*'s understanding of rational empirical study is as sketchy as he assumes such work to be. Burt presented his analyses of the significance of genetic inheritance through the high correlation of intelligence test scores of twins reared apart. The evidence was to be increasingly persuasive as the number of twins studied increased. However, identical coefficients based on varying numbers of cases do not occur. It is meaningless here to say as *M* does, "He may have assumed that his procedure was obvious and not bothered to explain". The most reasonable explanation is that the extra persuasive power was based on a fiction.

Agreed that it is hard to figure out exactly what went on in Cyril Burt's mind as he was engaging in this activity but that is not the principle at issue.

M's satirical comments about the high heidyins of the British Psychological Society's work to unravel the accusations and interpretations that were made in many places ring a bit hollow when we remember that, contrary to his view, the natural response of any group to attack on one of its honoured members is to close ranks. For the Council of the BPS to conclude that one of its most eminent researchers, an applied psychologist who had for decades influenced social policy (for Labour governments too), and its first knight, had published inexplicable results was a painful matter indeed. For their motive, *M* impugns malice. Is it not possible that it was commitment to scientific probity?

Those with further interest in the inside workings of a contemporary scientific community may care to read the BPS's *A Balance Sheet on Burt* (obtainable from the British Psychological Society, St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, price £1.00), which opens out their discussions including the scholarly evidence of Professor Leslie Hearnshaw and the investigations and views of Dr Oliver Gillie.

I bravely own to editing that publication and even to being a past President of the Society, but assure *M* that like many of my colleagues, I consider the Burt tragedy more in sorrow than in anger.

HALLA BELOFF
University of Edinburgh

M WRITES:

1. I did not write that Burt was "impulsively and therefore unjustly condemned". I wrote that the case against him, when examined, proved to be full of holes.

2. Dr Joynson's study can hardly be called "revisionist", if this implies a *parti pris*. He undertook it because he was puzzled, and decided to re-examine the available (and inadequate) evidence.

3. I did not accuse the Council of the BPS of acting "precipitously" or even precipitately. I reported Dr Joynson's point that the Council's Report took "fraud" for granted (and proved), and instructed the third of Burt's main accusers (herself married to the second) to look for "further misdemeanors"—without trying to find out whether Professor Hearnshaw's charges against Burt would withstand detailed scrutiny.

4. If my "understanding of rational empirical study" is "sketchy", what am I doing with a Ph.D. degree?

5. No one denies the utter implausibility of identical coefficients for different cohort sizes. But if fraud, not muddle, is "the most reasonable explanation", why on earth did Burt not fake the coefficients?

6. Can anyone explain the phrase "high heidyins"?

7. I shall be glad to read the BPS's *Balance Sheet*, but suggest that any final reckoning should include Dr Joynson's meticulous and impartial investigation.

8. My own verdict, as indicated, remains open; but I repeat: the remedy for bad science is good science—not bad science pointing the opposite way.

Islam & the West

THERE ARE two kinds of scholars studying Islam today: the first deal in racial and sectarian stereotypes, treating Islam as an aggressive beast to be beaten down because it preaches "hatred of the West", "terrorism", is "violent" and "militant" and involved in a "drive for hegemony as a potential power throughout the world" (I quote from Professor P. J. Vatikiotis's review article, "Islam on the Move?", ENCOUNTER, November, in which he comments on my book, *Discovering Islam*, 1988); and the second who wish to further our understanding of it through neutral scholarship. Professor Vatikiotis falls in the first category and Lawrence Rosen, one of the authors whose books he reviews, in the second.

Vatikiotis's review is mischievous, deliberately misquoting my arguments or placing them out of context. Let us start with his central theme: Muslims have hated the West since the 10th century; we are back to the crusades. This makes me wonder whether he has really read my book. The first few pages explain that my "encounter with the West . . . has been neither bitter nor barren". Vatikiotis fails to point out the many great features of Western society I underline, such as democracy and technological advances. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the Muslim intellectual often finds refuge from per-

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secution at home in an "Escape to the West" (pp. 204-6).

Francis Robinson, an authority on South Asian Islam, in reviewing the same book describes me as a "Muslim well-disposed towards the West" (*History Today*, January 1990). Indeed, I have been criticised for being too sympathetic to the West by some Muslim reviewers: the Iranian-supported *Afkar* (London, May 1988); *The Muslim World Book Review* (Leicester, April 1988); and M. W. Davies in *Knowing One Another* (1988).

Vatikiotis misleads by quoting my reference to "the Saudi miracle" out of context. He fails to mention my analysis which led one reviewer to observe: "We are given a blisteringly accurate account of contemporary Saudi Arabia in a way that no non-Muslim could or would dare duplicate" (*British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 15, nos 1 & 2, 1988).

I am accused of ignoring the plight of Muslim scholarship, yet I have an entire chapter on education, section two of which begins, "Muslim scholarship is in a shambles . . . ." As a political scientist Vatikiotis would have liked a discussion of *Sharia*, Law and state power. But I was writing a largely personal book, one aiming to describe what it feels like to be in Muslim society and culture at a given time in history.

"Islamic Anthropology" simply means the study of Muslims by Muslims, and here he misquotes me. In fact, the examples I give of neutral and, therefore, acceptable scholarship are of Geertz in the USA, Gellner in the UK and Nakamura in Japan; none of them Muslim.

Claiming that the study of Islam owes its existence to European scholars, Vatikiotis sarcastically wonders whether I have heard of some of his colleagues; indeed I have and at least one has been a welcome house guest in Pakistan. While not denying the tremendous contribution of Europeans, I wonder whether he has heard of Muslim scholars like Tabari, Batuta and Masudi who wrote tomes on the ethnography, geography, and history of Muslim society centuries before Vatikiotis and his colleagues.

VATIKIOTIS traces the humanist and scientific base of my Islam to the Arab reformers of this century like Hasan el Banna. His Middle East obsession makes him oblivious to the great 19th-century reformers of South Asian Islam like Sir Sayyed Ahmed and Amir Ali. Working within the Islamic tradition they, none the less, sought synthesis and dialogue with Europe.

Dismissing my book as "emotional", it is not pointed out that I have made explicit its "part autobiography" and "part literature" nature. Vatikiotis misses the point of my mentioning the killings at Sabra and Shatila. His justification of these killings as tit for tat for earlier ones does not make sense to me. Innocent villagers killed by armed forces, whatever their religion or nationality, is reprehensible.

For Vatikiotis there is an Ayatollah struggling to emerge beneath every Muslim and must be shouted down. Vatikiotis whose subject is Muslim politics would seem to live with the terrible dilemma of an obvious pathological hatred of Islam.

One of the admirable features of Western society is its capacity to enter into debate, hear the other side, and accept valid criticism. By refusing to do this Vatikiotis supports Edward Said's contention that the Orientalist wishes to impose his own fixed views on Muslim society; he is not interested in treating the other as equal.

I will not refer to the many positive reviews *Discovering Islam* has received in the West, but I will request readers to judge for themselves by going to the source and reading the book. Vatikiotis, I suggest, should acquire a copy of *Orientalism* and do some soul-searching.

In his shrill dismissal of Islam, Vatikiotis mirrors the street mullahs who shout against any dealings outside Islam with equal frenzy. We understand the sources of his antipathy to Islam: he is a non-Muslim refugee from a Muslim country. Muslims, he tells us, "threaten the survival of other sectarian and ethnic communities in their midst". If this is true in his case—it is not generally true—we must master personal obsessions and move forward. With the misunderstandings between Islam and the West I believe dialogue, however fraught with misgiving, is critical. There is an important principle involved: it is the question of tolerance and communication in multi-cultural, multi-religious societies like the UK.

The Berlin Wall has come down; I hope some day the wall between Islam and the West does too. But it cannot unless the two learn to treat each other with dignity and understanding; perceptions like those of Vatikiotis will not help. Fortunately people like him are not representative and their personal prejudices easily spotted.

AKBAR S. AHMED

Selwyn College
Cambridge

PROFESSOR P. J. VATIKIOTIS'S article, "Islam on the Move?" (ENCOUNTER, November), in which he reviews some recent books on aspects of Islamic affairs, displays a disturbing hostility towards Muslims. He is, of course, entitled to his opinions; but I question whether anyone, and least of all a teaching academic, is justified in supporting his opinions by resorting to the kind of dishonesty shown by Professor Vatikiotis. I will illustrate this by reference to one of the books he reviews, Dr Akbar S. Ahmed's *Discovering Islam*, for of the five it is the one with which I am most familiar.

Already, in the second sentence of the first paragraph referring to this book, we find inaccuracies. Here, and throughout, Professor Vatikiotis refers to Mr Ahmed. To omit the title "Dr" suggests either a meanness of spirit that does not wish to recognise academic achievement (can it be that his contempt for the book extends to the author?) or, more charitably, that Professor Vatikiotis did not read the book with close attention, and, specifically, that he failed to note the author's academic attainments, listed on the back cover. Perhaps it would not suit his assertion that the author is "without adequate knowledge or expertise" to acknowledge that he has gained a doctorate.

The second paragraph includes what appears to be another instance of ungenerous distortion, in its reference to the author's discussion of "the role of mahdis and 'millennial' (i.e. millenarian) movements in Islam". Dr Ahmed uses the word millenarian, so the use

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of the quoted phrase by Professor Vatikiotis is incomprehensible.

Professor Vatikiotis refers to Dr Ahmed's "chosen heroes", Hassan el-Banna and Maulana Mawdoodi—yet each receives only three brief mentions in *Discovering Islam*, one of which in each case is in the introduction and thus no more than prefigures the reference in the main text. Nor is there anything in the context of these one-liners to suggest that Dr Ahmed regards them as heroes.

The reference to the author's "amusing confusion" over the change in direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca seems equally gratuitous. Dr Ahmed makes no more than a parenthetic reference to the revelation that brought about the change, and does not seek—for it is not relevant in the context—to examine its reasons: so it is hard to see how Professor Vatikiotis can conclude that he is "confused".

After these ill-founded criticisms, it is the more amazing to read Professor Vatikiotis's references to Dr Ahmed's "disrespect for facts" and "gratuitous hostility". Granted that anyone may be genuinely mistaken—even perhaps Professor Vatikiotis himself—the tenor of the article suggests that these phrases apply more aptly to the SOAS professor who wrote the article than to the visiting professor at Cambridge, Dr Ahmed, who wrote the book under discussion. It is doubly disturbing to find these attributes, apparently amounting to a pathological hatred of Muslims, in an academic who earns his living as Professor of Politics with reference to one of the areas of the world in which Islam is represented by a majority of the population. The Middle East has its problems, as we all know all too well; and many Muslims acknowledge that Muslims themselves are at least partly to blame. But that does not absolve others from striving for objectivity in their relations with Islam.

The three Abrahamic faiths have much in common; and their adherents can both learn from and contribute to the Western liberal tradition without necessarily violating their deeply held beliefs. Dr Ahmed himself says that his own encounter with the West was neither bitter nor barren, though one would not guess it from Professor Vatikiotis's observations.

AT A TIME when there is much racial and sectarian hatred in the world we need, not to foster it with tendentious and inaccurate words, but to create a wider awareness of our common needs, our common humanity: we are all members of the only race that exists in the species known as *Homo sapiens*, the human race. Islam, incidentally, recognised this 1,400 years ago, while modern science has only lately come to acknowledge that the popular concept of "race" has no scientific foundation.

How much more constructive is the approach of, say, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, who is much involved with interfaith dialogue and has described Dr Ahmed's *Discovering Islam* as "superb"; or of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, which has established a formal "Trialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths" in the United States. Here in the United Kingdom, the Calamus Foundation has been formed with many of the same aims, and especially to show the tolerant face of the great monotheistic faiths. Professor Vatikiotis asserts, without supporting arguments, that in Muslim eyes the non-Islamic world is hostile. While there are undoubtedly Muslims who believe this, what is perhaps more surprising in the face of such evident hostility as that of Professor Vatikiotis himself, is that there are also Muslims who do not.

He suggests, too, that Muslims seek world hegemony. A few, no doubt, do so, just as some adherents of other belief systems have in the past and still do today. Many more are driven by their helplessness and sense of oppression to make claims that, if they were accorded ordinary human rights, they would neither need nor, probably, wish to assert. There is a difference between the belief that Islamic values are humane and good and that adherence to them is likely to bring about a better world, and the desire to impose them by force. The Quran, indeed, specifically states that "there is no coercion in religion". The Professor should beware of deducing the general from the particular, and of assuming that Muslims are tainted by the mirror image of his own prejudices, in a manner more characteristic of the uneducated mind than of the academic.

SABA RISALUDDIN
The Calamus Foundation
London

Cleo Sings, the Lion Roars

IN CONNECTION with Melvin J. Lasky's "Berlin Notebook" (ENCOUNTER, April 1989), in which he reported with dismay on the increasing number of punishable cultural crimes on our stages here, I'd like to report another felonious assault on a classical text. I did not see the representative of ENCOUNTER at the Berlin première, but it could be (as is, on occasion, his wont) that he left early on in the four-hour new production of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* directed by Hans Neuenfels of the *Volksbühne*. Neuenfels demanded (and got) several million D-Marks more from the Berlin Exchequer for this new season; and he can well afford any fines that your "Negative Tax" commission may see fit to impose.

But first your lawyers have to clarify whether the production of the play comes under "Theatre" rather than "Cinema". For the whole thing appears to be happening in a Hollywood film studio, and we are treated to the roar of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer lion (if not to the pleasures of *ars gratia artis*). One can't be quite sure, of course—every up-to-date theatre-goer knows that avant-garde art has also caught up with Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle—but some time in the course of the evening when I, too, was tempted to leave, I saw Cleo opening a door on the stage, and quite clearly beyond it was the familiar movie-house neon sign: "EXIT". So we know that we're not in Cairo but California. Or are we? But then why do the Latin lovers address each other, not as in the translation as *"Herr" und "Gnädige"*, but as the original "Lord" and "Madam"? The Roman troops always reply with a smart "Aye, aye, Sir!" (I won't go into the details of the miserable new Shakespeare translation that was commissioned instead of using the traditional Schlegel-Tieck rendering—which might have suggested that the tale was a relatively old story.)

Some of the musical accompaniment for Shakespeare's ill-fated saga of *Antony and Cleopatra* comes straight from Tin Pan Alley, and at one point we hear Marilyn Monroe's voice breaking into *"I wanna be loved by you"*. That's *her* theme. *His* is "a look"—straight out of the close-cropping fascist barber shops of Mussolini's Italy. She has "a new look" too, which (as *Der Tagesspiegel*'s drama critic, Günther Grack, noted) comes out of a number of *Vogue* in the 1920s. Stylish gowns they are, too. Octavius Caesar's soldiers also get something extra: Colt pistols at the ready, while he, the future Emperor Augustus, plays with the twirling, round *Globus* of world power . . . Charlie Chaplin's Hitler in *The Great Dictator*, get it?—although that wasn't an MGM film, and maybe that's why Hans Neuenfels didn't have the lion roar at the end of four felonious hours.

If things go on like this, and your "Negative Cultural Tax" is in place at the Common Market's dramatic deadline in 1992, my rough guesstimate would be that the new European Chancellor of the Cultural Exchequer will be making a fortune.

FRITZ STERN
Berlin

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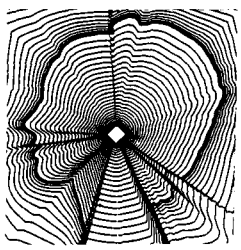
Life & Letters Today

Iquitos, Peru



THE POSSIBLE DREAM: **Seventy years after the rubber boom, Iquitos remains an otherworldly place. Those living there inhabit the kind of fourth dimension which inspired Peru's great writer Mario Vargas Llosa to make it the setting for two of his novels.**

"The rest of Peru", Llosa says, "regards Iquitos as something closer to fiction than reality."

The town where once you became as rich as you liked is today the town where you become whom you like. Look in the birth records and you find names like Lady Diana Martinez, Alain Delon Cachique, Maycol Jackson. Not that the place respects only contemporary icons: Rommel and Lenin are also popular, and one pair of brothers rejoice in the names Hitler and Mussolini Mego.

Llosa's contention: "The idea of Iquitos is the idea of a world where anything is possible".

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Berlin

LEADING THE LEAGUE: *The German Bible Society has criticized* UNESCO *for committing mistakes in its literary statistics. In a list of world-wide translations* UNESCO *has ranked the Mickey Mouse comic-strip booklets before the Bible (which was also placed behind the works of Lenin and the detective stories of Agatha Christie). The Bible Society said it approved of the fun which Mickey Mouse was giving in 284 different languages, but the Bible had already been translated into 310 languages, and different books of the Holy Scripture were available in 1,907 languages.*

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

Brighton

DIALOGUE IN DISNEYLAND: **Now children, in today's critique of pure reason Aristotle will be played by Mickey Mouse and the part of Wittgenstein will be taken by Donald Duck.**

The 1,000 delegates at the 18th World Congress of Philosophy which opened in Brighton recently might look down in disdain from their Olympian heights of intellect on the world of Disney. But Lord Halsbury, president of the Royal Philosophical Society, suggested in his opening address that using familiar cartoon characters could be a way of introducing children to the ideas of ethical choice without scaring them off the study of philosophy for life.

THE TIMES

Salzburg

AMADEUS: *In a recent commentary on the "Anschluss" of Germany and Austria there were references to "Maria Theresa, Mozart and Schuschnigg", as if all three were Austrians. This is not so. As should be by now well-known, Mozart was born as a subject of the Archbishop of Salzburg whose "Erzbistum" was, like many other ecclesiastical principalities of the time (Kurmainz, Kurtrier, etc.), an independent state within the Reich. When the "Erzbistum" of Salzburg was secularised in 1803, W. A. Mozart was many years dead (d. 1791). In addition, it was only in the year 1805 that Salzburg was joined to Austria.*

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

Ankara

GRAFFITI: **A Turkish schoolboy who had scratched the word "Marxism" on his desk fainted when he was cleared of spreading communist propaganda, after spending a year in prison and psychiatric hospitals. The state prosecutor had demanded Melih Calayoglu be sent to jail for at least five years.**

THE INDEPENDENT

San Salvador

EVER-TRICKY TRANSCRIPTS: *Vice-President Dan Quayle was on a Latin-American tour, and his "on-site education" in foreign affairs had begun with visits to the capitals of Venezuela and El Salvador.*

He slipped up once. In El Salvador, boyishly enthusiastic to keep the media happy, he ran ahead of himself at a press conference and asserted that the Salvadoran army was "eliminating human rights". This raised rueful smiles, particularly among reporters who had recently investigated a massacre of villagers.

He should have said "human rights abuses". Diplomatic "damage control" quickly issued a transcript of his remark, carefully adding the word "abuses".

Before take-off in Washington Mr Quayle crammed himself with facts, figures and clues to dealing with the ever-tricky Latins.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

OTHER HALF: **Alexander Walker is quite wrong about the term "Significant Other". I, too, laughed when I first heard the phrase, in a superior Brit way.**

It concerns someone other than yourself, who is important to you. The nearest "English" equivalent is "Next of Kin". If you go to hospital or die you would like to let someone know. That person may be spouse (probably still the most common arrangement); friend; parent; lover; or child. Hence the need, accepted and widely used, for a term like "significant other".

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

Washington, D.C.

VOCAB. LESSON: *You can always tell when Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan, foreign minister of Pakistan, has been in town: the national security establishment and its hangers-on begin dropping unfamiliar English words.*

As previously reported [William Safire writes], **feckless** *is the vogue word in the spookspeakeasies for "ineffective, helpless"; now the word on everybody's lips in Foggy Bottom is* **otiose**, *"idle, indolent, lazy".*

I confronted Yaqub-Khan with this suddenly with-it word and asked if he was the source; he **demurred** *(a verb in diplolingo that means "denied, purring"), adding, "Americans are not so* **ductile**."

O.K., you guys in the interagency task forces working on a succession of summits, this week's adjective is **ductile**: *"easily molded; tractable; pliable." Any* **otiose** *sherpa who cannot use it in a sentence about arms negotiations is* **feckless**.

NEW YORK TIMES

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